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Tsukyu NAO
presents!

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ADEKAN
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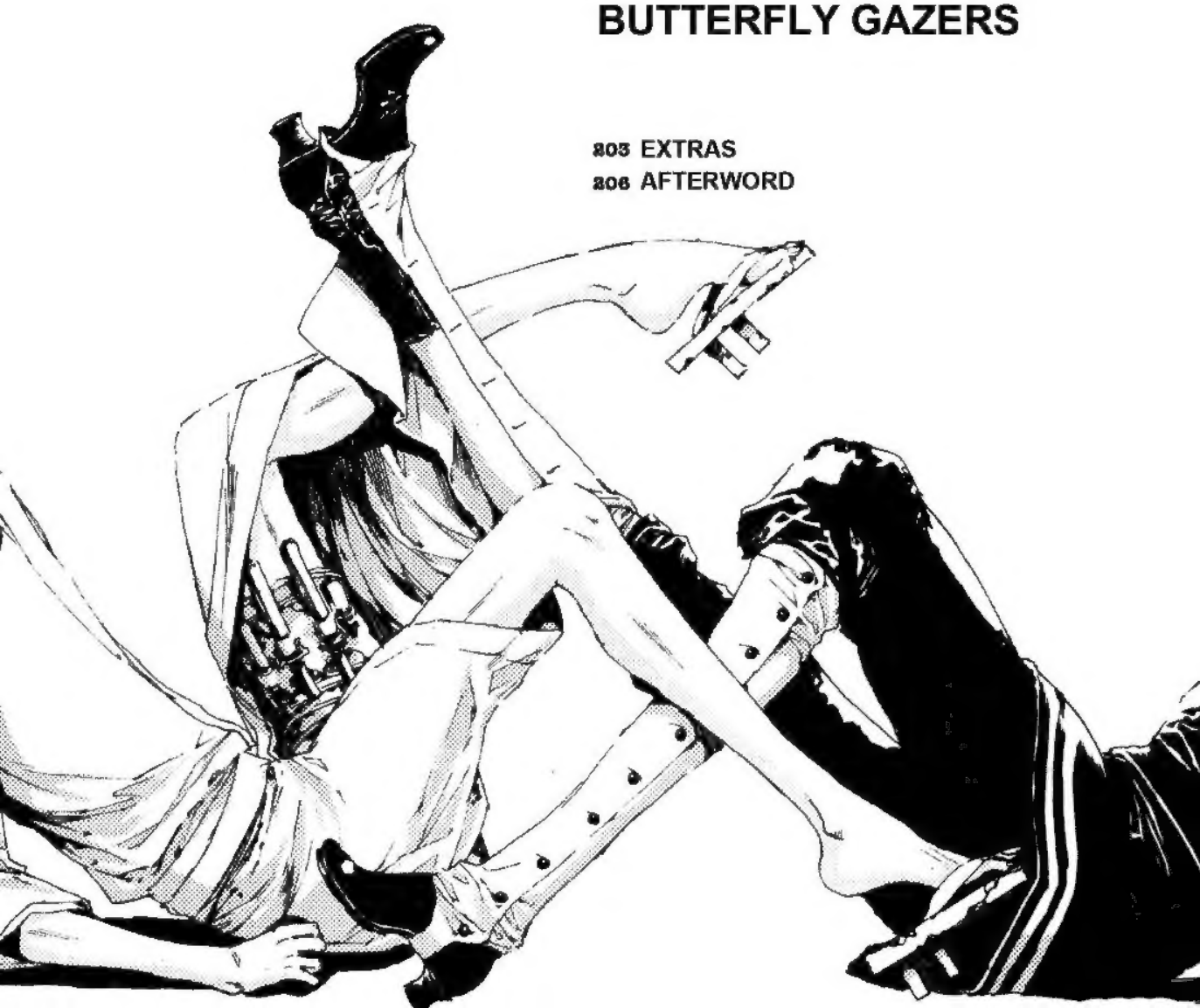


艶漢の人々

PEOPLE IN "ADEKAN"

The mysterious killer who is coming after Shiro.
ANRI YOSHIWARA

From left to right: **SABUROUTA ARAGAMI / AGURI YAMADA**
MIZUHIKO SAOTOME (SECOND OFFICER) / RURIMARU SAKIHANA (HEAD OFFICER)

A super laid-back umbrella craftsman who has trouble keeping on his loincloth properly.
SHIRO YOSHIWARA

A hothead who hates nothing more than super laid-back people.
KOJIRO YAMADA

THIS COMIC WAS ORIGINALLY TITLED "KOKAN SHIGOTOKI TSUYAFUBUKI"
(OF GOOD MEN AND THEIR JOBS - A STORM OF ELEGANCE)
WHEN IT RAN IN SHOSETSU WINGS MAGAZINE.
THOUGH IT HAD BEEN RENAMED TO "ADEKAN", WE HOPE
THAT YOU WILL ENJOY IT JUST AS MUCH.

CHAPTER I
BRIDE'S BRIDGE

HEY, HAVE YOU HEARD ...
ABOUT THE BRIDE'S BRIDGE OVER THERE.
OH, THAT BRIDES CROSS THAT BRIDGE AFTER THEY MARRY?
YEAH. BUT THERE'S A RECENT RUMOR ABOUT SOME CRAZY WOMAN CROSSING THE BRIDGE,
DRESSED UP IN A BRIDE'S KIMONO STAINED WITH BLOOD...
OH!
THERE ...!
...!!
IT'S HER ...!
PEACE FOR THE PEOPLE EQUALS PEACE FOR THE COUNTRY!
はっ
THAT'S THE MOST BASIC CONCEPT !!

MA'AM, HOW MUCH LONGER UNTIL YOUR HOUSE?
ONE HOUR.
ARE YOU SERIOUS!?
THOUGH MY SHOULDERS FEEL LIKE THEY'RE ABOUT TO POP!
GOT IT, BROTHER!!
THEREFORE, THIS IS THE MOST BASIC OF BASIC DEEDS!
GOT IT, BROTHER!!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING!!?
LINNG!!
HEHEH... YOU HAVE SUCH BROAD SHOULDERS ...
W-WHAT DID YOU SAY!? AM I GETTING SEXUALLY INTIMIDATED BY A GRANDMA HERE!?
DIDN'T YOU OVEREXTEND YOURSELF A LITTLE DURING SHOPPING, LADY? WHAT WERE YOU GOING TO DO IF I HADN'T PASSED BY!?
COME WITH ME!
LEAVE THAT OLD LADY TO SOMEONE ELSE!
!
THESE STREETS AREN'T SAFE!!
WE'VE GOT OUR HANDS FULL WITH THAT MAD WOMAN PASSING BRIDE'S BRIDGE, AND THE HANABUKI GANG!!
DIDN'T I TELL YOU TO LISTEN AROUND FOR NEW INFORMATION!!?
M-MR. HEAD OFFICER!!

UGH...
THEIR EYES AND NOSE WERE HOLLOWED OUT, AND THEIR HANDS AND FEET WERE SEVERED.
THEY'RE THE ONLY ONES AROUND HERE THAT WOULD COMMIT SUCH A BRUTAL ACT.
THESE JUST GOT CARRIED IN...
POLICE
THE BODIES OF TWO WOMEN, DISCOVERED ON THE RIVER BANK.
AGAIN !?
THEY WERE ROBBED OF ALL VALUABLES.
JUDGING FROM THE KNOWN FACTORS, IT'S CLEAR THAT THE HANABUKI GANG IS RESPONSIBLE.
SOME NEW INFORMATION CAME IN THOUGH.
THERE'S A RUMOR THAT THEY'VE BEEN SEEN AROUND THE MERCHANT'S ALLEY.
AGURI! I HAVE TO DO SOME POLICE WORK NOW, SO YOU SHOULDN'T FOLLOW ME AROUND!
BUT... I WANT TO HELP!

...HM?
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE BEEN TO THESE PARTS.
ALWAYS YOU WITH YOUR GODDAMN BROTHER COMPLEX...
JUST TODAY, OKAY !?
OKAY ...
SIGNS ON THE HOUSE SAY: YOSHIWARA UMBRELLA'S
A SUSPICIOUS SHOP IF I EVER SAW ONE.
LET'S START HERE.
EXCUSE ME!!
I'M FROM THE POLICE, AND...!!

OH!
...
N-N-N-NOTHING!! IT'S JUST, YOU KNOW, THE BIRDS AND THE BEES, DOING THEIR LITTLE DANCE...
HUH!? I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND THAT, BUT IT SOUNDS COOL!!
W-WHAT DID YOU SEE!?
ヒソ
ヒソ
LIMM ... WELL ...
CAN I HELP YOU?
...
WHAA !!
ガラッ
ピシャッ

Y-YOU ...!!
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE LETTING DANGLE THERE IN FRONT OF MY LITTLE SISTER!!?
CENS-ORED!!
ANY-WAY...
MY NAME IS KOJIRO YAMADA, AND I'M FROM THE POLICE.
AND THIS IS MY LITTLE SISTER, AGURI.

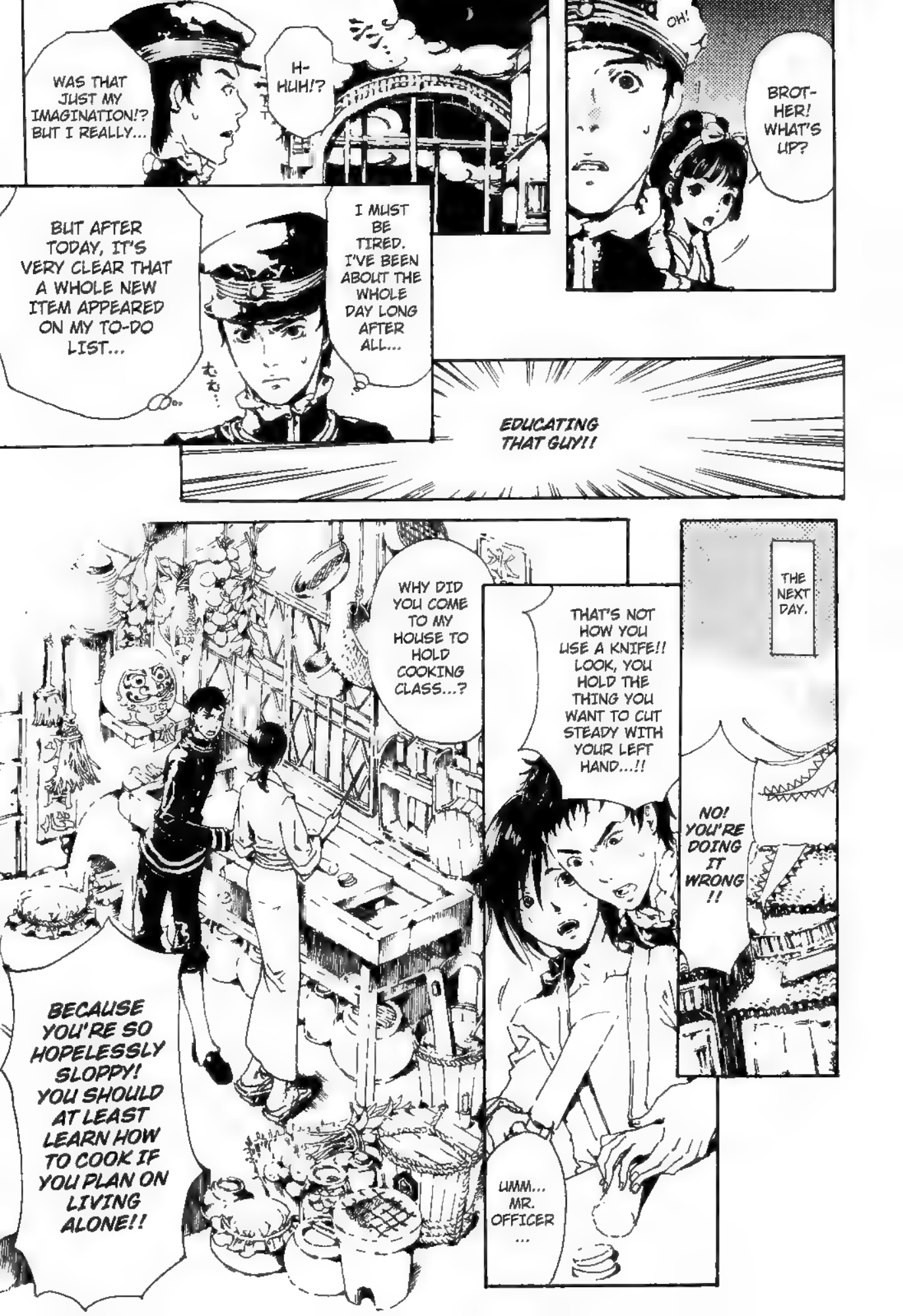
FROM AROUND HERE?
'KAY. I'M SHIRO YOSHIWARA, AND I MAKE UMBRELLA'S. I MOVED IN HERE TWO YEARS AGO.
SO YOU AREN'T THE PARENTS OF THAT UNNATURALLY LARGE BABY OVER THERE?
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT.
AND THIS IS MITSU AKIZUKI. SHE LIVES AROUND HERE.
OH NO, OFFICER, I THINK YOU HAVE THE WRONG IDEA ABOUT US.
CLOTHES ?
IF YOU LEAVE THIS GUY ALONE, HE'D JUST WALK AROUND NAKED ALL DAY LONG.
HUH?
HE WON'T DO ANYTHING BY HIMSELF. HE'D JUST LOAF AROUND ALL DAY.
SO I CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM LIKE THAT.
JUST NOW I WAS ONLY TRYING TO PUT CLOTHES ON SHIRO, WHILE HE WAS SLEEPING.
SO NOW AND THEN I COME BY TO HELP OUT A LITTLE...
WHAT A USELESS GUY...
I SEE... SO WHAT ABOUT THE BABY?

MISS MITSU DECIDED TO TAKE CARE OF THAT BABY.
IT'S ONE OF THOSE 'ABANDONED BABIES'.
I'VE HEARD THERE'S A LOT OF THOSE LATELY.
PEOPLE WILL ATTACH A SUM OF MONEY TO AN UNWANTED BABY,
AND PUT IT IN SOMEONE ELSE'S CARE.
IT MAY BE BECAUSE IT IS GETTING HARDER FOR THE CITIZENS TO GET BY...
BUT IT IS A GRIM STORY NEVERTHELESS.
'EAH.
ONE DAY, I SAW MISS MITSU WALKING AROUND WITH THAT BABY...
AND AT FIRST GLANCE ...
WHOA, MISS MITSU! WHAT'S UP WITH THAT BABY!?
I TOOK HER IN. I JUST COULDN'T LEAVE HER THERE LIKE THAT.
AHH... AGAIN?
...

AND YOU SEE... SOMETHING ATTRACTED ME ABOUT THE BABY, SO I DECIDED TO TRY TO TAKE CARE OF IT.
HMM, I SEE. YOU SEEM TO LIKE THE THRILL OF HAVING SOME-THING THAT SURPRISES THE HELL OUT OF PEOPLE.
BUT MISS MITSU IS A NICE LADY. SHE'S ALREADY TAKEN IN FIVE BABIES LIKE THAT...
AW, STOP IT SHIRO... I'M NOT... ...OW!
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
OH, DON'T WORRY. IT'S JUST THAT MY HEADACHES HAVE GOTTEN WORSE LATELY.
SO, HOW CAN WE HELP YOU, OFFICER?
WE GOT HOLD OF A RUMOR THAT THE HANABUKI GANG WAS SEEN AROUND THIS AREA.
OH, RIGHT.
OH, THOSE GUYS THAT STEAL AND MURDER, AND DO SO MANY OTHER THINGS...
DON'T YOU KNOW ANY-THING?
...YOU MEAN THEM, RIGHT?

I'M SORRY. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THEM.
I SEE...
EXACTLY. A GANG OF CRAZY CRIMINALS, LEAD BY SAKICHI HANABUKI.
'KAY. I UNDERSTAND.
I SEE...
...WELL, IF YOU THINK OF ANYTHING AT ALL, PLEASE CONTACT US.
EVEN THOUGH SHE CAN'T AFFORD A WEALTHY LIFE HERSELF,
SHE STILL LOOKS OUT FOR SO MANY OTHERS.
EH?
OH, SHIRO! YOUR KIMONO HAS LOOSENED UP AGAIN!
WELL THEN...
HE'S REALLY LIKE A CHILD.
BUT SHE'S GOT A GOOD HEART.
...
BUT...

BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE IT OKAY FOR HIM TO BE THAT WAY!
MY GUESS IS THAT MISS MITSU REALLY LIKES HIM, AND THAT'S WHY SHE LOOKS OUT FOR HIM.
..WHAT A COMPLETELY USELESS GUY!!
HUH ...
...!!!
SHE'S CARRY-ING SOME-THING!
A BABY!?
IS IT THE MAD WOMAN FROM THE RUMORS!?


WAS THAT JUST MY IMAGINATION!? BUT I REALLY...
H-HUH!?
OH!
BROT-HER! WHAT'S UP?
BUT AFTER TODAY, IT'S VERY CLEAR THAT A WHOLE NEW ITEM APPEARED ON MY TO-DO LIST...
I MUST BE TIRED. I'VE BEEN ABOUT THE WHOLE DAY LONG AFTER ALL...
EDUCATING THAT GUY!!
THE NEXT DAY.
WHY DID YOU COME TO MY HOUSE TO HOLD COOKING CLASS...?
THAT'S NOT HOW YOU USE A KNIFE!! LOOK, YOU HOLD THE THING YOU WANT TO CUT STEADY WITH YOUR LEFT HAND...!!
NO! YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG!!
BECAUSE YOU'RE SO HOPELESSLY SLOPPY! YOU SHOULD AT LEAST LEARN HOW TO COOK IF YOU PLAN ON LIVING ALONE!!
UMM... MR. OFFICER ...

'KAY ...
JUST GIVE IT TO ME!!
LOOK CARE-FULLY HOW I DO IT!!
COOKING IS ALL ABOUT SPIRIT!!
SPIRIT !?
ALL RIGHT, IT'S READY!!
30 MIN-UTES LATER.
WOW!! IT SMELLS SO GOOD!
IT SMELLS REALLY GOOD.
H-
HEY!
STOP THAT!
IT DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY! YOU SHOULD USE CHOP-STICKS!!
I HATE CHOP-STICKS.
WHAT !?

ALL RIGHT THEN. BUT JUST ONE BITE, GOT IT?
HERE YOU GO.
かぷ
TALK ABOUT HIGH MAINTENANCE...
TASTES GOOD!
IT'S ...!
IT'S HANGING OUT AGAIN!!
HERE! PUT IT ON! PUT IT ON RIGHT NOW!
WHAA!!
I DON'T LIKE UNDERW-
SHUT UP ALREADY!! WHERE ARE YOUR LOIN-CLOTHS??
IN THE DRAWER OVER TH...
HERE!!

ALL RIGHT, I'LL SHOW YOU HOW IT'S DONE!!
PUT IT ON PROPERLY! IF YOU ONLY HIDE HALF OF IT, IT LOOKS EVEN MORE SLEAZY!!
CENSOR-ED
BROT-HER!!
...
HUH!?
...
NO!! MORE TIGHTLY, LIKE THIS!!
AH, I THOUGHT I'D FIND YOU H-
T-THIS ISN'T WHAT YOU THINK! IT'S NOT THAT I HAVE A LOINCLOTH MANIA! AND... THIS ISN'T LOINCLOTH-PLAY EITHER... UMMM...!!
TIGHTLY?
EXACTLY! WTIH ALL YOUR MIGHT, PULL IT UP AS TIGHT AS YOU CAN!!

...
AHA-HAHA!
EH?
きゃはは
AHAHA! YOU TWO ARE SO FUNNY!!
PFF!
SHIRO,
YOU LOOK BETTER WHEN YOU SMILE, YOU KNOW.
MUCH BETTER THAN YESTER-DAY.
...EH?
Y-YOU'RE COMING TOMOR-ROW AS WELL?
YEAH, I AM. I JUST CAN'T LEAVE A GUY LIKE YOU LIKE THAT.
HUH !?
ばさっ
ALL RIGHT, THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY! TOMORROW I'LL COME AGAIN TO TEACH YOU HOW TO COOK RICE!

YOU DON'T SEE GUYS LIKE HIM THAT OFTEN THESE DAYS...
...
...
ガラガラ
SEE YOU!
I SHOULD DO SOME BUSINESS ONCE IN A WHILE...
...
HM
HOW UNUSUAL TO SEE YOU GOING OUT LIKE THIS.
MISS MITSU!
ガラッ

NO, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
NO REALLY, YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH.

I WAS THINKING I SHOULD TAKE THAT BABY BACK FROM YOU.
I FELT KINDA BAD FOR YOU.

'EAH. CAN I HELP YOU WITH ANYTHING, MISS MITSU?

...

TRUST ME ON THIS!
NO REALLY !!

AHAHAHA!
BESIDES, ARE YOU TRULY ABLE TO CARE FOR A BABY?

...

HOW I KILLED THAT BABY.
YOU SAW ME THAT TIME, DIDN'T YOU?

I FELT A PRESENCE BEHIND ME WHEN I WAS BURYING THE BABY I KILLED LAST TIME.
THAT WAS YOU, WASN'T IT?
I THOUGHT IT'D BE WEIRD IF IT WASN'T.
SINCE YOU SUDDENLY INSISTED ON TAKING THAT NEW BABY OVER FROM ME.
YOU ACCEPT THE UPBRINGING FEE TOGETHER WITH THE CHILD, JUST TO KILL THE CHILD LATER ON, HUH?
EXACT-LY.
DID YOU KILL THE OTHER FOUR TOO?
NO, NOT FOUR...
THIRTY-FOUR.

NOW THAT'S QUITE A STORY...
...
...HA-HA...
GOT IT!
MITSU, YOU SHOULD BE HEADING HOME. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THIS.
...
!
THAT'S ENOUGH.
I'M FROM THE HANABUKI GANG.
...WHO ARE YOU?

...LET HIM GET IN BETWEEN US!
I JUST COULDN'T LET HIM...
WE ARE FINALLY...
YES,
TWO YEARS AGO, WHEN I FIRST MET SHOKICHI,
THESE FLOWERS WERE BLOOMING TOO!
...GOING TO BE TOGETHER NOW!
TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THEN.
WE HAVE FINALLY ACCUMULATED THE MONEY.
I WILL FINALLY BE ABLE TO WEAR IT!

MY BRIDE'S KIMONO.
I ALWAYS LOOKED AT IT WITH INTENSE DESIRE, BUT... I ALWAYS KNEW IT COULDN'T BE ANY-THING BUT A DREAM FOR A POOR GIRL LIKE ME.
BEAUTIFUL BRIDES CROSSING BRIDE'S BRIDGE...
LET'S HAVE OUR WEDDING ON THAT BRIDGE.
EVEN SO, THAT MAN, PERHAPS OUT OF LOVE FOR ME...

IT FELT LIKE A DREAM.
BUT...
MITSU, WE HAVE TO TALK.
IN FACT, I'M A MEMBER OF THE HANABUKI GANG.
HUH...!?
OF COURCE, I PLAN TO SEVER MY TIES WITH THEM.
BUT... IN ORDER TO DO THAT...
I NEED A SUM OF MONEY.
MITSU, WON'T YOU HELP ME GATHER THE MONEY FOR THAT?
...
JUST BEING IN THIS GANG TERRIFIES ME.
A HORRIBLE IDEA CROSSED MY MIND ...
IN THE ALLEYWAY BLACK MARKETS, THERE ARE PEOPLE TO BE FOUND WHO HANDLE ABANDONED CHILDREN.
FROM THEM, YOU CAN TAKE IN AN ABANDONED BABY, TOGETHER WITH AN UPBRINGING FEE.

THAT MAN HAD GIVEN ME THIS WONDERFUL BRIDE KIMONO, AFTER ALL.
THE DAY I'LL BE ABLE TO WEAR THIS ON THE BRIDGE IS NEAR.
I CAN'T TURN BACK ANY-MORE.
THOSE RUMORS ABOUT THE MAD WOMAN CROSSING THE BRIDE'S BRIDGE...
I WONDER WHO IT IS...
AND ... AFTER RECEI-VING THE BABY AND THE SUM, I WOULD KILL THE BABY.
AND THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE REPEAT-ED.
THE FIRST TIME I DID IT, IT ALMOST DROVE ME CRAZY BECAUSE OF THE GUILT.
BUT I ENDURED IT FOR THE SAKE OF MY GOAL.
THAT'S A LITTLE BIT LIKE ME.
A BLOOD-STAINED BRIDE'S KIMONO HUH...
... HEHE...

!!!?
!
WHA-AH!!
!!
WHA A!!
!!
HUH ...!?
N-NOO !!
JUST A HALLU-CINA-TION ...?
PANT
PANT
PANT
AND THIS HEADACHE...
POUND
WHY AM I HAVING ALL THOSE HALLUCINATIONS RECENTLY...

WHAT !?
M-MY BRIDE'S KIMONO ...!!
!!!
...BLOOD !?
C-CALM DOWN...
T-THIS IS JUST ANOTHER HALLUCINATION... IT MUST BE...
PANT
PANT
H-HOW FAR DO HALLUCINATIONS GO!?
W-WHAT'S UP WITH THIS BLOOD!?
HUH...?
THIS ISN'T AN ILLU-SION !?
R-REAL BLOOD...?
スル

POUND
H-HUH!?
AM I...?
NOW I THINK ABOUT IT, IT MIGHT BE...
... IS ME?
COULD IT BE...
...THAT THE MAD WOMAN OF BRIDE'S BRIDGE...
HAVE I... GONE MAD?
POUND
OH MY ...
HOW COULD IT...
MITSU!
!!
WHAT'S WRONG, SHO-KICHI!? I THOUGHT YOU'D ALREADY TAKEN CARE OF HIM!
!?
HEY.
S-SHO-KICHI!
SHO-KICHI!!

I'LL FINISH HIM OFF HERE.
I COULDN'T JUST SHOOT MY GUN THE MIDDLE OF TOWN, YOU SEE.
AFTER I'VE DONE THAT WITH YOU!
!!
...!!

ゴトッ
CAUSING ALL THAT MADWOMAN RUCKUS.
I CAN'T HAVE PEOPLE LINKING YOU TO US.
ダン ダン
...!!
BUT YOU MADE US MORE MONEY THAN I THOUGHT.
I NEVER THOUGHT YOU'D GO SO FAR JUST FOR SOME WEDDING KIMONO I STOLE.
D-DON'T TELL ME YOU...
...OH NO...
EXACT-LY.
I'M SAKICHI HANABUKI.

!!
HM? SURPRISED THAT THE LEADER OF THE HANABUKI IS A FRAIL SKINNY GUY LIKE ME?
YOU KNOW, VILLAINS DON'T NEED PHYSICAL STRENGTH.
THEY NEED WIT AND CUNNING. AS LONG AS YOU'VE GOT THAT, YOU'RE SET.
YOU'VE GOT A NICE LOOKING FACE. THAT'S GOOD! MORE FUN FOR ME!
I THINK I'LL START WITH SHAVING OFF YOUR NOSE...
AND NOW FOR YOU.
!
W-WHAT'S UP WITH THIS GUY...
THOSE EYES ...
...

I HEARD A GUNSHOT AND I THOUGHT I'D LOOK INTO IT...
O-OFFI-CER!
!?
LET SHIRO GO!!
I'M GLAD I ARRIVED IN TIME.
IT'S IN FACT THANKS TO THE FACT THAT I WAS WANDERING AROUND AFTER LOSING SIGHT OF AGURI.
KILL HIM.
DON'T DO THIS! RUN AWAY FROM HERE!!

OF-
FICER
!!
O-
!!
RUN
AWAY
!!
DRAW
!!
WHA...!
NNNNGH!!
AAH!!
UGHH!!

HM,
HE'S STRONGER THAN I EXPECTED.
PLEASE JUST RUN!!
MR. OFFICER! DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME!
...
WE'LL HAVE HIM DEAD IN NO TIME.
BUT THERE ARE JUST TOO MANY OF US.

AGH !!
UH !
...NO, I WON'T !!
THIS PERSON...
HE SHOULD UNDERSTAND BY NOW THAT HE'S GOING TO DIE SOON.
...
HAHAHA, WHAT A WASTE OF EFFORT.
UH...
...TO CARRY OUT HIS BELIEFS.
HE GOES AS FAR AS PUTTING HIS LIFE ON THE LINE,
THIS IS...
THESE TYPE OF PEOPLE.
SO THEY STILL EXIST...

AH!
CLICK
HUH?
...INTER-ESTING!
VERY INTER-EST-ING !!
EEK ...!!
WHA ...
H-HUUH !!?
I DIDN'T WISH FOR THE OFFICER TO SEE ME LIKE THIS, BUT...
IT CAN'T BE HELPED.

FROM ABO-VE...!
W-WHAT?
!?
ヒュ
WHA
AH-
AAA-AAH!!
AAH!!

YOU ...!
バキッ
!?
S-SHIRO !!
AH!
AH!!
AH!
NO KIDDING... I SHOULD GET OUT OF HERE...
ガラン
... HUH?
IS THIS BOY SOME KIND OF MONSTER...
HA-HA...

HUH...!!
SHO-KICHI...
DO YOU REALLY THINK I CAN LET IT END HERE!?
STOP IT!!
AFTER HAVING WORKED MYSELF ALL THE WAY UP HERE,
I LOVE YOU... SHO-KICHI...
STOP THAT!
H-HEY, YOU!
NO, DON'T DO IT!!
NO...
NO!!
NO!!
AH...!
AH!
UH!
AAA-RGH !!!

UGH...
UH...
UH...
PANT
PANT
I'LL HAVE YOU FACE YOUR PUNISHMENT!
REST AT EASE. I DIDN'T KILL YOU.
PANT
PANT
I'M SORRY I HAD YOU INVOLVED IN ALL OF THIS.
I WAS ACTUALLY PLANNING TO TAKE CARE OF THEM ALL BY MYSELF.
WELL...
YEAH, THANKS TO YOU.
OFFICER, ARE YOU ALRIGHT?

YOU SHOWED AMAZING SKILL BACK THERE.
BUT RATHER, WHO ARE YOU REALLY!?
HMM, I SEE.
I WOULD NEVER RUN AWAY LEAVING SOMEONE TO DIE!!
TO BE HONEST, I THOUGHT YOU'D RUN FOR IT...
I FOUND OUT WHAT MISS MITSU WAS DOING... AND JUST WHILE I WAS TRYING TO FIND MORE INFORMATION...
I GOT CAUGHT BY HANABUKI, AND THEN WELL.... WHAT HAPPENED HAPPENED...
BUT RECENTLY I QUIT CARRYING WEAPONS AROUND...
I USED TO BE A HIDDEN WEAPON USER.
CLICK
SEEING A GUY LIKE HANABUKI, SO ROTTEN TO THE CORE, MADE ME MOVE ON MY OWN.
I SEE. SO YOUR SENSE OF JUSTICE BROUGHT YOU TO THIS.
I DECIDED TO PICK UP MY SWORD ONCE AGAIN.
NO.

...
...
I SEE.
SO, OFFICER, AREN'T YOU GOING TO BE INVESTIGATING ME?
HUH?
CHANCES ARE SMALL THAT A FORMER HIDDEN WEAPONS USER COULD BE RUNNING AN INNOCENT BUSINESS.
HAHA... THAT...
BUT, YOU SAID YOU QUIT CARRYING WEAPONS AROUND!
ANY OFFICER WOULD THINK TWICE ABOUT THAT...
...COULD HAVE BEEN A LIE, COULDN'T IT?
CAN YOU REALLY TRUST ME?

YOU SAVED MY LIFE!
HUH?
OF COURSE I TRUST YOU!
CAN YOU HELP ME OUT WITH THAT TOO?
'KAY.
AN UNUSUAL PERSON...
HEHE...
HE REALLY IS...
ANYWAY, NOW TO HAUL THESE GUYS IN...
!
HUH?
NO THANK YOU...
I THINK IT'S YOUR DESTINY TO JOIN THE POLICE CORPS! USE YOUR SKILLS TO BENEFIT THE PUBLIC!!
SHIRO!!

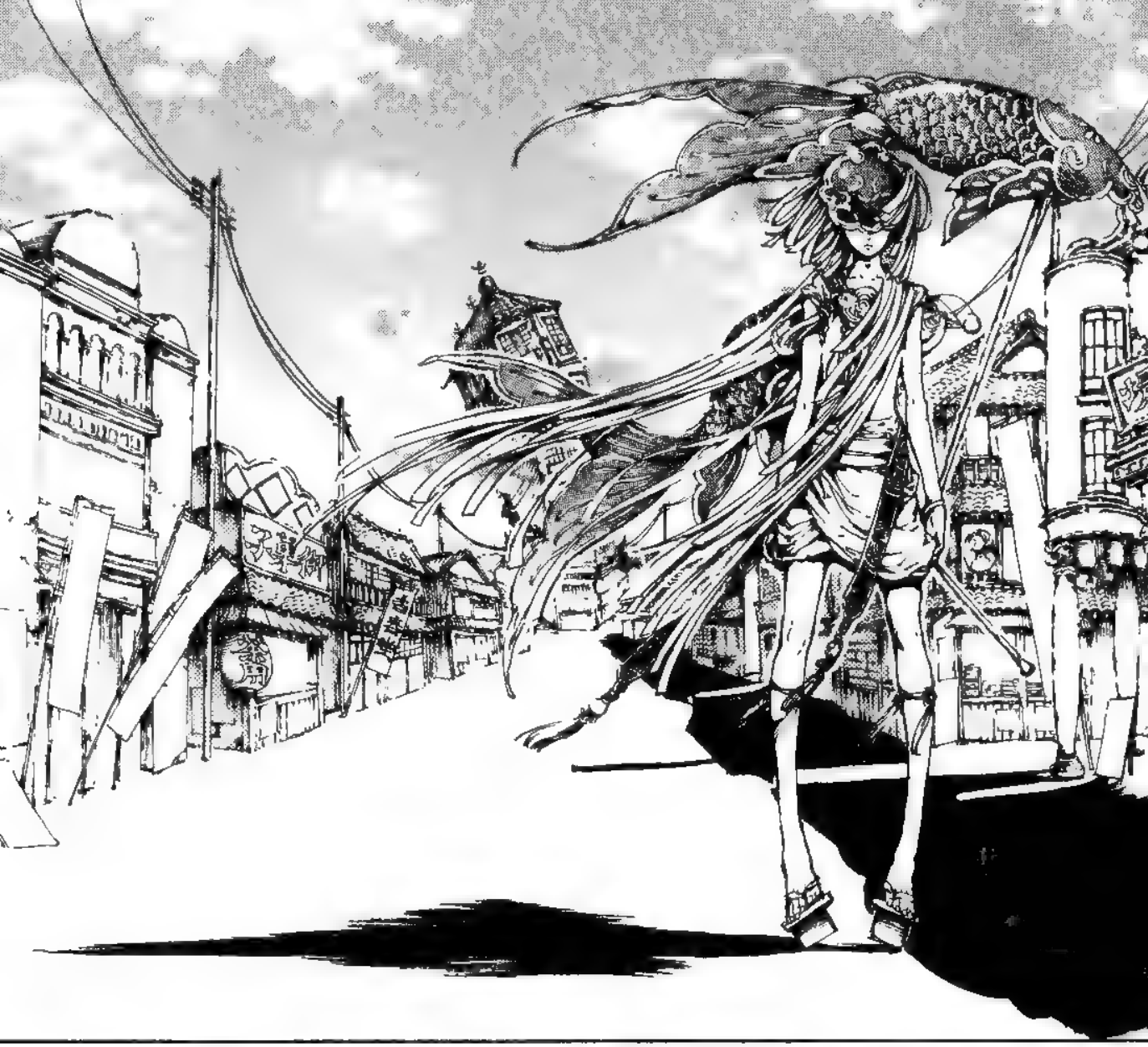
BRO-THER !!! MAS-TER SHI-RO !!!
P-PLEA-SE STOP THAT!
DON'T BE SHY NOW! COME ON!!
NO! I DON'T WANT TO!
AND I'M SURE THIS UNIFORM WOULD LOOK GOOD ON YOU TOO! TRY IT ON!
I BOUGHT SOME THINGS ...
JUST PUT IT ON!!
NO!
JUST TRY! IT'LL PUT YOU IN THE MOOD!
N-NO, AGURI!! THIS ISN'T A UNIFORM MANIA OR UNIFORM FOREPLAY OF ANY SORT...!! UMM...!!
PFFF!
AHAHAHA! YOU TWO REALLY ARE SO FUNNY!
END

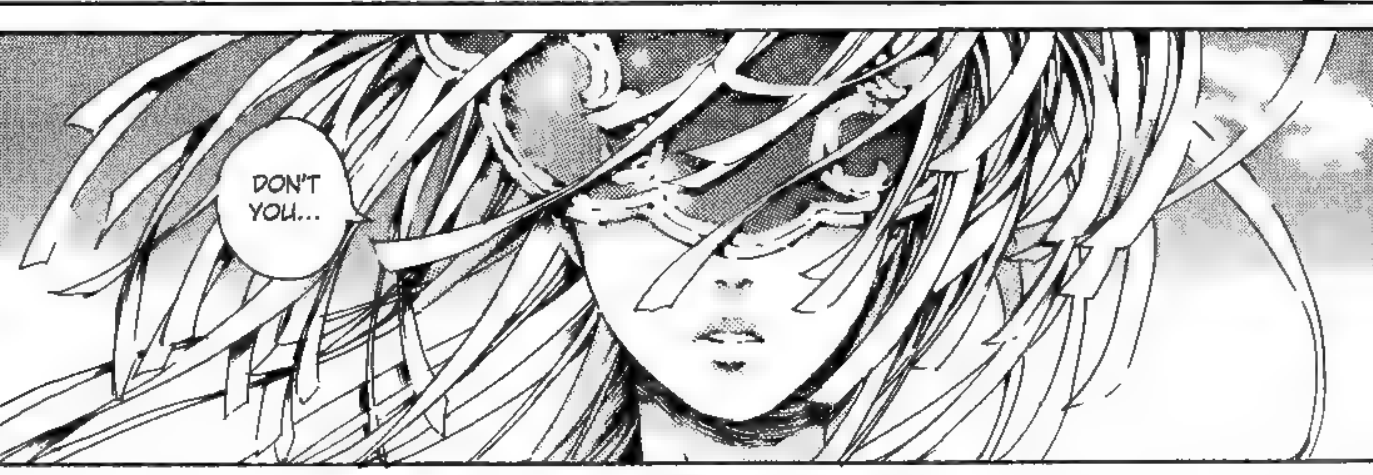
AL-WAYS ...
WHY ...?
WHY DO I... ON THE DAY AFTER A SERIAL KILLER STRIKES...
HUH ...
...FIND SOMEONE'S BELONGINGS IN MY ROOM?
CHAPTER II
DON'T THINK SCARY THOUGHTS LIKE THAT...!!
AM I...!?
DON'T THINK ABOUT IT!
AM I THE KILLER...?

CHAPTER II

OPPOSITE MIRRORS

WHO COULD IMAGINE YOICHI TODO WOULD GET KILLED.
STARTLING, ISN'T IT, AYAMEKO?
ISN'T IT FRIGHT-ENING?
MEN FROM THE NOBLE FAMILIES AROUND HERE ARE BEING KILLED ONE AFTER THE OTHER.
IT'S ALREADY THE SIXTH NOW.
YEAH... EVEN THOUGH IT'S POSSIBLE I AM THIS KILLER...
I WONDER IF THEY'LL BE ABLE TO CATCH THIS KILLER.
I ALMOST WISH SOME MONSTER WOULD APPEAR ...
TO SEE IT JUST TEAR EVERYTHING APART...




DON'T YOU...

!?
...WANT TO BUY AN UMBRELLA?

!
'EAY. THIS GOLDFISH MODEL IS LIMITED TO THIS SEASON...
AN UMBREL-LA?
A GUY!
!!
THIS IS...
AYA-ME-KO...

YOU SURE SURPRISED US. PASSING OUT IN FRONT OF US FROM AN EMPTY STOMACH.
'KAY.
THERE'S PLENTY, SO YOU CAN TAKE IT EASY.
I'M GLAD WE WERE NEARBY.
'EAH. THANK YOU FOR THAT.
I'M THE OLDEST DAUGHTER OF THE MIZUKAMI FAMILY, AND THIS IS MY YOUNGER TWIN SISTER, AYAMEKO.
PLEASE MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.
OH, NO NEED TO THANK US.

...
WELL, YEAH... WE'RE VERY DIFFERENT IN EVERY ASPECT, SO PEOPLE ARE OFTEN SURPRISED.
THERE ARE TWINS WHO ARE LIKE MIRROR IMAGES OF EACH OTHER, AFTER ALL.
WHY IS IT...
YOU TWO ARE TWINS...?
MY NAME IS SHIRO YOSHIWARA.
...THAT I AM SO UGLY...?
I HAVE AN UMBRELLA SHOP IN THE MERCHANT'S DISTRICT.

M-MASTER... SHIRO YOSHI-WARA...
...
...MASTER YOSHI-WARA...
YOUNG LADIES, THE OFFICER YOU CALLED IN JUST ARRIVED.
OH, SHOW HIM IN.
OH,
OFFI-CER.
HELLO.
I'M OFFICER KOJIRO YAMADA.
DON'T "OH, OFFI-CER." ME, YOU IDIOT!!
EEK !!

OH, YES. WE'RE FRIENDS.
U-UMM... DO YOU TWO KNOW EACH OTHER?
TH-THAT HURTS ...
I GET A CALL SAYING SOMEONE HAS A MAN WHO PASSED OUT BECAUSE OF HUNGER, AND LO' AND BEHOLD IT'S YOU AGAIN!!
THEY SEEM MORE LIKE PARENT AND CHILD THAN LIKE FRIENDS...
ALL RIGHT!
TH-THANK YOU FOR THE MEAL.
WHERE'S YOUR THANK YOU FOR THE MEAL!?
HM-MM-MN ...!!
LOOK AT YOU! FOOD ALL OVER YOUR FACE!
I'M SEEING SOMETHING AGAIN I DON'T WANT TO SEE.
SHIRO ...?
GEEZ, WHAT WOULD BECOME OF YOU IF I WEREN'T THERE...
BESIDES, WHY AREN'T YOU MAKING YOUR OWN FOOD TO EAT!?

TURN FOR THE WORSE

HMM? DO YOU HAVE AN OVEN TO MAKE THOSE IN THE HOUSE?
OH, YEAH... MY FATHER USES IT FOR HIS JOB, SO IT'S A PRETTY DECENT ONE...
IT'S VERY WELL MADE...
YOU HAVE A VERY GOOD ARTISTIC SENSE, AYAMEKO.
EH?
TH-THANK YOU VERY MUCH ...!!
...
NOW I LOOK AT YOU MORE CAREFULLY, YOU HAVE AN UNUSUAL HAIRCOLOR.
IT'S A LITTLE BROWNISH, AND WAVY.
ALMOST LIKE CANDY SHAPED LIKE HUMANS THAT YOU SEE ON THE MAINLAND.
...
M-MY HAIR IS TOO LIGHT, AND SO UNRULY...
AH ...
OH, WHY ...

I'M SUCH A...
CHUCKLE
WHY AM I SO UGLY...
I WISH I HAD STRAIGHT, BLACK HAIR JUST LIKE HASUMIKO...
EVEN THOU-GH WE'RE TWINS ...

OW !!
!!?
...
HMM...
IT'S NOT AS SWEET AS THE CANDY.

C-CALM DOWN PLEASE. YOU'LL TURNING INTO A GANGSTER YOURSELF.
U-UMM... OFFICER?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, I'M OKAY!
HUH!?
IS THERE REALLY NO LIMIT TO YOUR RUDENESS!!?
WHAT DID YOU THINK, YOU IDIOT!!
UGH!!
...
...
THANK YOU FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY.
WELL THEN...
HAVE A NICE DAY.
MASTER YOSHIWARA...
THANK YOU FOR STAYING WITH US. WE HAD A DELIGHTFUL TIME.

AYA-MEKO DEAR,
DON'T TELL ME YOU FELL IN LOVE WITH THAT YOSHI-WARA.
!
O-OF COURSE NOT! WE'VE JUST MET!
BAD IDEA, DEAR, BE-CAUSE,
ALL THE GENTLEMEN YOU'VE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH...
ISN'T THAT WHAT HAPPENED ?
CAN YOU IMAGINE? MAYBE YOUR BROKEN HEART MAKES YOU DO THIS UNCON-SCIOUSLY...
...ALWAYS END UP GETTING KILLED.
WITH ALL THE PREVI-OUS ONES...
OR AM I THINKING TOO MUCH?

OH NO...
MAYBE I SHOULD THROW ALL THIS STUFF AWAY.
I'LL BE IN MY ROOM.
HMM... MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT.
...HASUMIKO, STOP THAT. IT'S JUST A COINCIDENCE.
ALL THE MEN THAT GOT MURDERED WERE GENTLEMEN I SECRETLY HARBOURED FEELINGS FOR.
AND ALWAYS THE DAY AFTER THE SERIAL KILLER STRIKES.
I HAVE NO IDEA HOW...
...BUT I ALWAYS FIND THINGS IN MY ROOM THAT DON'T BELONG TO ME.

WHAT IF I WAS THE ONE UNCONSCIOUSLY DOING THIS...?
JUST WHAT IF...
AND THESE PAST FEW MONTHS, THEY'VE BEEN KILLED ONE AFTER ANOTHER...
WILL HE BE NEXT?
BUT WHAT IF...
はっ
OH NO!! I SHOULDN'T THINK THINGS LIKE THIS! IT IS JUST IMPOSSIBLE!!
OH, WHAT AM I THINKING...
HE'S A PERSON I ONLY JUST MET.
AND BESIDES, I CAN'T ALLOW MYSELF TO FALL IN LOVE.
WHAT IF...
MY DREAMS WILL ALWAYS STAY UNFULFILLED ANYWAY.
WHAT IF I WERE BEAUTIFUL, JUST LIKE THE MIRROR IMAGE OF HASUMIKO I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE.

WHY AM I SUCH A WORTHLESS GIRL?
JUST LIKE HER ...
...I COULD BE ENGAGED TO A BEAUTIFUL AND POWERFUL YOUNG MAN.
OH, YOU'RE SUCH A HOPELESS CASE!!
DIDN'T I TELL YOU NOT TO COME TO THIS AREA BECAUSE THERE'S A SERIAL KILLER AT WORK HERE!?
WELL, YEAH...
DO YOU THINK SAYING 'WELL, YEAH' WILL MAKE ME LET YOU OFF THE HOOK!? GUYS LIKE YOU SHOULD ESPECIALLY WATCH OUT!
WHY IS THAT...?
ALL VICTIMS UP TO THIS POINT... HAVE ALL BEEN BEATIFUL YOUNG MEN FROM A GOOD FAMILY.

WE'RE PROBABLY DEALING WITH A PSYCHOPATH HERE.
NOT ONLY THAT, THE DEAD BODIES HAVE BEEN A TERRIBLE SIGHT.. SOME WERE FOUND WITH PARTS OF THEIR BODY BURNED AWAY.
CATCHING HIM WILL BE DIFFICULT, UNLESS WE CAN CATCH HIM RED-HANDED.
HE'S QUITE SKILLED THOUGH, BECAUSE HE DOESN'T LEAVE ANY EVIDENCE BEHIND.
...
YOU DON'T SEEM LIKE YOU'RE FROM A GOOD FAMILY, BUT YOU'RE QUITE GOOD-LOOKING.
YOU SHOULDN'T COME HERE EITHER, OFFICER.
SO, DON'T COME NEAR THIS PLACE EVER AGAIN.
IF SO...

YOU'RE A REALLY GOOD GUY.
A MUCH BETTER CATCH THAN ME.
I THINK IT'S VERY FOOLISH, WHEN A 'BEAUTIFUL FACE'...
...IS DEFINED AS WHEN THE BALANCE OF FACIAL MUSCLES AND THE POSITION OF THE EYES AND NOSE...
...HAPPEN TO ALIGN THEMSELVES WITH WHAT PEOPLE SEE AS 'BEAUTIFUL' IN THAT GENERATION AND TIME.
I'M DEAD SERI-OUS.
HEHE
BUTTERING ME UP WON'T GET YOU DINNER, YOU KNOW ...

WHAT YOU HAVE, OFFICER, IS VERY BEAUTIFUL.
SLIDE
...IS WHAT LIES BENEATH.
WHAT SHOULD BE IMPORTANT, RATHER THAN THE BALANCE OF THE FACIAL FEATURES,
ENOUGH TO MAKE WANT TO SINK MY TEETH INTO IT.
WON'T YOU STOP THAT !!?
W-
WHAT IS THIS...
IS THIS WHAT YOU SO SUDDENLY CALLED ME HERE FOR?
SO, SHIRO...
THE NEXT DAY.
ARE YOU SERIOUS!!? WHY DON'T I START CALLING YOU SM-SHIRO FROM TODAY !!?
...!
'EAH, I'M DEFINITELY A SADIST.
STOP TRYING TO BITE EVERY-THING! ARE YOU SOME KIND OF SM MANIAC?

I WANTED YOU TO TRY IT ON, OFFICER.
'EAH... IT'S MY NEWEST UMBRELLA... AND ITS ACCESSORIES.
WHAT'S THIS COMING OUT OF MY CROTCH, HUH!!? A RISING DRAGON!? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO LIBERATE ME OF HERE!?
ARE YOU STUPID? DO YOU REALLY THINK SOMETHING LIKE THIS IS GOING TO SELL, HUH, SM-SHIRO !!?
THE THEME IS 'WATER AND LIBER-ATION'.
EEK !!!
PLEASE ALLOW ME TO MEASURE THE SHAPE OF YOUR FEET.
HUH !?
T-THE MAIN REASON WHY I CALLED YOU HERE ISN'T THIS...

SHIRO ...
YOU'RE AN UMBRELLA MAKER, RIGHT? WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?
LATELY, I'VE BEEN FEELING INSPIRED TO MAKE SOME CHANGES.
I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE SOME FOOT-ACCESORIES TO GO WITH THE UMBR-ELLA'S
MORE ACCESORIES !? WHY THE HELL WOULD PEOPLE WANT THAT !!?
UH...
HAHAHA! THAT TICK-LES!!
PLEASE SPARE ME, SHIRO!!
...

HE SEEMS PRETTY SERIOUS, FOR ONCE...
OKAY.
...
STOP MOVING, PLEASE.
DANG, IT'S JUST TOO TICKLISH !!
UH ... ...
OH, I KNOW ...
I'LL DISTRACT MYSELF WITH PAIN.
THIS IS UNBEAR-ABLE...
PFFT...
I'LL HAVE TO GO WAY FUR-THER...!!

N-NO-THING...
...WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?
IT'S FINISH-ED!
THANK YOU!
...
KING OF TICKLISH FEET
KING!
KING!
OFFICER ?
AND...
YOU KNOW, IF THERE WAS A FESTIVAL TO CELEBRATE TICKLISH FEET, I WOULD DEFINITELY BE CROWNED THE KING OF THE FESTIVAL!
'KAY. THANK YOU.
ALL RIGHT. I'LL HEAD BACK TO THE POLICE STATION THEN.
'EAH.
...REALLY?

MASTER YOSHI-WARA!
ガラッ
MISS HASU-MIKO!
HELLO!
WON'T YOU HAVE A LITTLE CHAT WITH ME?
...ALL RIGHT.
I KNOW A GOOD PLACE.
WELL ...
I GUESS I SHOULD GET READY TOO...
ピシャッ
HMM ...
NOT BAD FOR SOMETHING I MADE IN A RUSH...

HOW LOVELY !!
I NEVER KNEW THERE WAS A GARDEN LIKE THIS IN TOWN!
'EAH.
SO...
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT?
MASTER YOSHI-WARA...

KOJIRO!
SOMEONE'S HERE TO SPEAK TO YOU!
MISS HASU-MIKO...!!
!
OFFICER ...!! YOU GOT TO HEAR THIS...!!
MASTER YOSHIWARA HAS BEEN KIDNAPPED ...!!
SHIRO HAS !?
WE WERE HAVING A CHAT IN A LITTLE GARDEN IN THE MERCHANT'S DISTRICT, BUT THEN...
SOMEONE SUDDENLY APPEARED BEHIND HIM, AND...
HE GOT SMASHED IN THE HEAD, AND TAKEN AWAY AFTER THAT...

!
IT MUST HAVE BEEN AYAMEKO!
SHE DID IT!! I KNOW, BECAUSE...
PLEASE CALM DOWN.
AH ...
I-I WAS SO FRIGHT-ENED, I JUST RAN AWAY ...
AYA-MEKO...
...
W-WHY ARE YOU HERE!?
AYA-MEKO ...!!
SHE ARRIVED HERE JUST MOMENTS BEFORE YOU.
ALL VICTIMS HAVE BEEN MEN SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH!
HASU-MIKO!
SO IF MASTER YOSHIWARA IS GETTING TARGETED NOW, HOW CAN IT BE ANYONE E-...
!

THINGS I NEVER SAW BEFORE, THAT I STARTED FINDING IN MY OWN ROOM. ANOTHER PERSON'S BELONGINGS ...
W- WHAT IS THIS!?
!
SHE TOLD US ABOUT ALL THESE THINGS SHE FOUND IN HER ROOM.
BUT I...
IT'S LIKE YOU SAID. I MIGHT BE THE KILLER.
I WAS TOO AFRAID TO TELL ANYONE BEFORE,
I HAVEN'T DONE *ANYTHING* TO MASTER YOSHIWARA!
BUT FINALLY I FELT BRAVE ENOUGH TO GO TO THE POLICE.
HUH !?
STOP PLAYING DUMB!! I PUT ALL OF THOSE IN YOUR ROOM AS A PRANK!
S-
...

BUT WHY !?
YOU PUT ALL OF THIS IN MY ROOM AS A PRANK !?
YOU DID IT, DIDN'T YOU!!?
EVEN THOUGH YOU KNOW THIS DOESN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE KILLINGS!! WHAT DO YOU MEAN WITH "I MIGHT BE" THE KILLER!!?
I JUST THOUGHT I'D MESS WITH YOU A LITTLE.
!!
WELL... SINCE THE VICTIMS ALL HAPPENED TO BE MEN YOU ADMIRED...
HASUMIKO ...WAIT!!
...
HASUMIKO, THAT'S HORRIBLE!! WHY...
I'VE ALWAYS DETESTED YOU!
BECAUSE, SINCE AS LONG I CAN REMEMBER...
YOU DON'T REALIZE HOW FORTUNATE YOU ACTUALLY ARE!
YOU WERE ALWAYS FEELING SO SORRY FOR YOURSELF.
JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT THE PRETTIEST,

DOES A MAN'S VALUE RELY ON POWER!?
HORRIBLE!? HE'S A MAN OF SUCH HIGH POWER!!
YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND WHAT I HAD TO GO THROUGH ...
...ON THE DAY WE FIRST MET.
SO... JUST ADMIT IT ALREADY, AYAMEKO!
B-BUT...
AH ...!!
YOU'RE THE KILLER, AREN'T YOU!?
STOP IT!
EVERY-THING GETS EXPECTED FROM ME INSTEAD.
BECAUSE FATHER THOUGHT HE COULDN'T EXPECT THAT MUCH FROM YOU,
WHILE YOU WERE PLAYING WITH YOUR FRIENDS, I WAS ALWAYS INSIDE WITH STUDIES OR SOME CLASS.
AND SOON ENOUGH, I WAS MARRIED TO THAT HORRIBLE MAN...

MISS AYAMEKO ISN'T THE KILLER.
BUT...
SO MANY BEAUTIFUL KILNS.
A GOOD WAY TO BURN CORPSES TOO, I SUPPOSE...
BUT WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE THEIR TRUSTED SERVANT?
WHY YOU...?
THAT'S QUITE A COMMIT-MENT.
ANYONE WHO PLAYS WITH LADY AYAMEKO'S HEART...
SHOULD DIE!

BE QUIET!
HUH !?
!!
MY FOOT DECORA-TIONS,
THEY HAVE METAL PLATES.
!!

AGH!
!!
AH!
AH !!
UGH!
GHA !!
NGH !!
Y... YOU ...
NO...
YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY!!

!
!!
!
!!?
HOW DID YOU...

!!
NGH!
OFFI-
CER!!
SORRY TO HAVE KEPT YOU WAITING, SHIRO!!
IT TOOK ME A WHILE TO PREPARE... ARE YOU ALRIGHT!?
'EAH.
BUT... YOUR GUESS WAS RIGHT!
UH...
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THIS MAN WOULD BE THE KILLER ...

'EAH.
WHEN I WAS TALKING TO MISS AYAMEKO THE OTHER DAY,
SHE TOLD ME THAT MR. MAKITANI WAS IN CHARGE OF MAINTAIN-ING THE KILNS.
I THOUGHT, SINCE THE BODIES FROM THE KILLINGS OFTEN HAD BURN MARKS, JUST MAYBE...
AND THE WHOLE TIME WE WERE TALKING...
THAT MAN NEVER STOPPED WATCHING ME.
WITH A LOOK LIKE HE WANTED TO KILL ME THEN AND THERE.
IF THERE WERE A FESTIVAL THAT CELEBRATED SENSING SOMEONE'S INTENT TO KILL, I WOULD DEFINITELY BE CROWNED THE KING.
KILLING INTENT SENSE
KILL
KILL
THAT WOULDN'T BE A FESTIVAL. THAT WOULD JUST BE SOME KIND OF SICK GAME.

BUT WHY...
TO THINK THAT MURDER WAS GOING ON RIGHT WITHIN OUR MANSION WALLS...
MAKITANI WAS THE KILLER...?
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!!
!
AGH !!
!?

MAKITANI !!? WHAT THE HELL HAVE YOU DONE !!?
WHA ...
YOU DID ALL OF THIS!? YOU LITTLE SHIT!!
GAH !!
HOW ABOUT YOU DIE! YOU GOOD-FOR-NOTHING !!
I- I'M SO SOR-RY ...!!
MAKE UP FOR IT WITH YOUR LIFE! DIE NOW ALREADY !!
AGH !!
...!!

OH... PLEASE FORGIVE ME, LADY AYAMEKO ...
AH...
LET ME GO!
THAT'S ENO-UGH!
I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO HIT ME ANYMORE ...!!
I- I DIDN'T ...
I KNOW I'M UGLY!!
AND YOU WOULD PUNISH ME.
WHENEVER YOU DEVELOPED FEELINGS FOR SOME GUY... YOU BECAME LIKE A WHOLE DIFFERENT PERSON...
I- I DON'T THINK THAT AT ALL...
YOU THINK THAT GENTLEMEN LIKE MR. TODO WOULD NEVER EVEN LOOK AT ME, DON'T YOU!?
UGH ...

ALL LOOK-ING DOWN ON ME!!
AH HH!!
SHUT UP, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!!
SCUM LIKE YOU CAN'T TALK BACK TO A HIGH-CLASS LADY LIKE ME!
YES!
I'M A NOBLE LADY!
BUT ALL OF YOU, HASUMIKO, FATHER, THE GIRLS AT SCHOOL...
...SO TERRIFIED OF YOU...
I- I BECAME SO...
WHA...
WH...
I COULDN'T JUST RUN AWAY AND LEAVE HER BEHIND...
BUT BECAUSE MY SICK MOTHER WAS UNDER THE CARE OF THE HOUSE...

A...
E-
EEH...!!
AH...
WHAT DID YOU SAY, YOU LITTLE PIECE OF SHIT!!?
...
I'M SO SORRY, MY LADY...
PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR TODAY!
PLEASE FOR-GIVE ME!
AS YOU SAY, I'M JUST A LOWLY BEING!
PLEASE FOR-GIVE ME!
...SUCH A LOWLY BEING LIKE ME.
I'M SO SOR-RY!
...
I'M SO SOR-RY!
FOR-GIVE ME!
AYAMEKO... I...
I NEVER REALIZED YOUR ILLNESS AT ALL...

WE'RE ALMOST LIKE...
TWO MIRRORS STANDING OPPOSED TO EACH OTHER.
WE'RE EXACTLY THE SAME.
FUNNY, ISN'T IT?
WE WERE BOTH SO CAUGHT UP IN OUR UNHAPPINESS, SO TAINTED.
COME IN!
!
ペタ
ペタ

...
すすすっ
すっ
OFFICER, PLEASE STOP THAT.
IT SEEMED TO ME YOU HAD TAKEN A LIKING TO MISS AYAMEKO.
SO I THOUGHT YOU'D BE FEELING DOWN...
WHY... AGAIN ...?
WHERE DID YOU BUY THAT STUFF?
I'M SORRY. I JUST WANTED TO CHEER YOU UP...

I DID HAVE AN INTEREST IN HER...
BUT IT'S NOT THAT I'M SAD NOW OR ANY-THING...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO HOLD ANYTHING BACK, SHIRO!!
OUCH!
!?
HEY... WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR LEG!?
!?
I WAS LYING WHEN I TOLD HIM THEY WERE MADE OF METAL.
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO PUT METAL IN DECORATIONS LIKE THOSE.
BUT THE KILLER SAID YOU WERE WEARING METAL-PLATED FOOT DECORATIONS!
OH... THAT ...
YOU DIS-LOCATED A BONE FROM THE RECENT INCIDENT !?
WHAT !?
BREATHE
I CAN FIX THIS BY MYSELF.
I DON'T LIKE DOCTORS.
Y-YOU IDIOT!? WHY HAVEN'T YOU GONE TO A DOCTOR YET...!?

...!!
...
ブル ブル
'KAY.
I FIXED IT.
せ"
せ"
...
キィ
!!!
ポロ
DO YOU THINK I'D BELIE-VE THAT!?
I DON'T WANT TO!!
SHUT UP! I'LL TAKE YOU THERE EVEN IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO!
BORRO-WED CLOTHES
!
BAKA!!

HEY, HASU-MIKO.
LATELY, PEOPLE HAVE SUDDENLY STARTED CALLING ME BEAUTIFUL.
THANKS TO THAT, I'VE MET A NICE GENTLEMAN.
I'LL INTRO-DUCE YOU TO HIM SOMETIME.
MAYBE THIS HUGE CHANGE CAME BECAUSE I REALIZED THAT THE PERSON AT THE ROOT OF MY COMPLEX...
...WASN'T ACTUALLY AS FORTUNATE AS I HAD THOUGHT.
...
A WHILE AGO, I DID HAVE A LIKING FOR THE UMBRELLA MAKER...
IT'S HARD WORK TO BE BEAUTI-FUL, ISN'T IT HASU-MIKO?
BUT HE'S NO GOOD, AFTER ALL.

SOMETHING MUST HAVE BEEN WRONG WITH ME.
THE WORLDS WE LIVE IN ARE JUST TOO DIFFERENT.
...
...
HM?
WHAT'S WRONG?
すす
OH...
...
ALL RIGHT.
IT'S NOTHING.
BY THE WAY...
TELL ME SHIRO...

I'M SORRY I FORCED YOU INTO THIS.
I TOLD YOU THAT I COULDN'T ARREST HIM UNLESS I CAUGHT HIM RED-HANDED.
THAT'S WHY YOU DECIDED TO BE THE BAIT, ISN'T IT?
I JUST DID IT BECAUSE IT SEEMED FUN TO ME.
OH, NO.
I THINK YOU'RE GIVING ME...
...A LOT MORE CREDIT THAN I DESERVE. BUT PERSONALLY...
SHIRO ...
TRUTH BE TOLD ...
THERE YOU GO AGAIN!! YOU DON'T HAVE TO HOLD BACK THE TRUTH!!
OW OW OW!! NO PINCH-ING!!

...I'M SURE THAT WHAT LIES BENEATH YOUR LOOKS...
...ALSO DESERVES WAY MORE CREDIT.
...
...IF YOU SAY SO, OFFICER.
BY THE WAY, SHIRO,
I JUST FELT SOMETHING ON MY HAND...
'EAH.
I'M NOT WEARING ANY UNDERWEAR, OF COURSE.
DIDN'T I TELL YOU TO WEAR YOUR LOINCLOTH PROPERLY !!?
WHAA !!
END

TEN YEARS AGO.
ALL RIGHT.
FROM TODAY ON, YOU'LL BE MY LITTLE BROTHER.
LITTLE BROTHER?
I SHOULD NEVER HAVE SAID THAT, THAT TIME.
SABUROUTA ARAGAMI 8 YEARS OLD
KOJIRO YAMADA 7 YEARS OLD

HOW COULD I HAVE KNOWN...

...THAT YEARS LATER, I'D GROW TO HATE HIM SO MUCH?

CHAPTER III

IMAGINE WHAT IT'D BE LIKE IF YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER (OR SISTER) WAS BETTER THAN YOU AT EVERYTHING.

CHAPTER III

BROTHERS' NOSTALGIA

I'M SURE YOU ALL KNOW THIS ALREADY.
TODAY'S ISSUE IS CONCERNING THE ATTACKS OF A RUMORED MAD DOG ON PUBLIC STREETS.
BUT, JUST BECAUSE WE'RE FACING A DOG, DOESN'T MEAN WE SHOULD UNDER-ESTIMATE THE SITU-ATION.
THE BODIES FOUND SO FAR HAVE BEEN MANGLED SO MUCH THEY'RE UNRECOGNIZABLE.
THAT CONCLUDES OUR MEETING!
SO!
EVEN POTATO CHIPS WILL STAB YOU IN THE GUMS IF YOU'RE NOT ATTENTIVE...
IT SHOULD BE FINE AS LONG AS YOU DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN.
AH, DID THAT SCARE YOU A LITTLE?
HEY, SABUROUTA,
DAMN, I DON'T LIKE THE IDEA OF THAT CRAZY DOG.
...
THAT'S DONE.
THAT'S DONE.
PHEW
...

HUH!? AREN'T THE ONLY PEOPLE NOWADAYS WHO CALL RANDOM GUYS THEIR BROTHERS EITHER GANGSTERS OR HOMO'S?
BUT, AREN'T YOU HIS 'BROTHER'?
HAVE YOU SEEN KOJIRO AROUND?
IT'S BEEN THREE MONTHS ALREADY.
WHAT, DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE STILL IGNORING KOJIRO.
HOW SHOULD I KNOW?
SHUT UP!
HE COULDN'T EVEN BE USEFUL FOR WIPING SOMEONE'S ASS.
HAHA, LOOK AT HIM, THE WUSS.
WELL, SINCE YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT KOJIRO, I HAVE NOTHING MORE TO SAY TO YOU.
W- WHAT DID YOU GUYS SAY!!? I *COULD* BE USEFUL FOR WIPING SOMEONE'S ASS!

DANG, HIS RIGHT ARM REALLY IS HUGE!
AND HE DOESN'T EVEN PLAY TENNIS!
DON'T UNDER-ESTIMATE THE POWER OF MY TEA-POURING ARM!
I'LL WIPE THIS WHOLE BOX'S WORTH OF IT!
THIS ISN'T FUNNY AT ALL!
ALL EVERYONE SEEMS TO CARE ABOUT IS DAMN KOJIRO!
MY ONE DEFINING TRAIT MIGHT BE THAT I'M FROM A RICH FAMILY.
AND I'M BELOW AVE-RAGE.
YAY, I WON THE KENDO TOURNAMENT!
SURE, HE'S ALWAYS BEEN ABOVE AVERAGE IN EVERYTHING.
AH... CHIEF.
OH, ARAGAMI.
I JUST DON'T STAND OUT AS MUCH AS HIM.
BUT, DURING MY HOURS, I HAVE TO WORK HARD TOO!

THAT RESTAURANT THE OTHER NIGHT WAS EXCELLENT! I HOPE TO JOIN YOU AGAIN FOR DINNER!
AH YES, IT WAS VERY GOOD!
UH... AN HONOR, SIR.
HAHAHA
I'D LOVE TO SEE THAT AGAIN!
YOUR NAKED MONKEY-DANCE WAS ALSO HIGHLY ENTERTAINING.
EH?
OH... SURE.
I'LL BE GOING NOW.
YES, SIR...
DID YOU HEAR THAT? NAKED-MONKEY DANCE...?
NOT AFRAID TO PULL OUT ALL THE STOPS HUH...
I HEARD HE TOOK THEM FOR A BUSINESS DINNER THROUGH HIS PARENTS' CONNECTIONS.
TALK ABOUT LETTING HIS MONEY DO THE TALKING.
HAHAHA
DOES HE WANT A PROMOTION THAT BADLY? THE USELESS TWAT.
GO ON, LAUGH AT ME!

KOJIRO !!
MMPH !!
HEY, SABUROUTA.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH USING MONEY FOR POWER? I'VE GOT NOTHING ELSE!
ISN'T IT A WIN-WIN SITUATION AFTER ALL?
UMM ...
YOU WHO ALWAYS GETS PRAISED.
SABUROUTA!! WHAT IS IT YOU DISLIKE ABOUT ME!?
I'LL NEVER KNOW IF YOU NEVER TELL ME!
...
AS IF YOU'D UNDER-STAND!
EVERY-THING!!
YOU WOULD NEVER UNDER-STAND!
I JUST SIMPLY HATE YOUR EXISTENCE! NOW LEAVE ME ALONE!

SHI-RO, WHY DON'T YOU HAVE ANOTHER DRINK?
'KAY.
THIS SCENT...
WON'T YOU PLAY THE SHAMISEN FOR US? IT'S BEEN SUCH A LONG TIME!
SHIRO?
!
MISS YAE, DID YOU TAKE ON A NEW CUSTOMER TODAY?
OH, CAN YOU TELL?

I THINK IT WAS ABOUT TWO HOURS AGO. HE WAS AN INTERESTING GUY, REALLY.
...
SHIRO, FROM TODAY, I WILL START WEARING THIS, YOUR LEAST FAVORITE FRAGRANT OIL.
TRACK THE SMELL BACK TO ME.
IT'S ONLY HUMAN NATURE THAT THE THINGS YOU HATE THE MOST...
...ARE THE THINGS YOU'RE LEAST LIKELY TO FORGET.
MAYBE IT WAS HIM...
SHIRO, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
I'M GOING HOME.
WHA-AT!!?
AH!

YOU IDIOT!
SHIRO... WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE TRYING TO SLIP OUT OF A WHORE HOUSE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY?
ヒクヒク
O-OH... OFFIC-ER.
ぽよよ
HUH?
GOING TO PROSTI-TUTES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY...
...
DON'T YOU HAVE ANY SHAME?
AREN'T ALL MEN LIKE THIS, OFFICER? WHENEVER THEY'RE GIVEN THE CHANCE, THEY'RE READY FOR BATTLE REGARDLESS OF THE TIME.
WELL, DON'T COME CRYING TO ME IF YOU END UP WITH ANY WEIRD DISEASES ALL RIGHT!?
SO, OFFICER, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE YOURSELF?
GRIN
F-FOR YOUR INFORMATION, I WAS SEARCHING FOR A RABID DOG!! I'M NOT LIKE YOU, YOU SEE!
WHAT ARE YOU GRINNING FOR!?
GOOD GOD...
I'M GETTING A HEADACHE FROM ALL THIS...

...DID ANYTHING HAPPEN?
SO ...
YOUR SO-CALLED OLDER BROTHER, OUT OF INTENSE DISLIKE FOR YOU, PEELED BACK EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOUR CUTICLES, AND...
PEEL
HE DIDN'T DO THAT! HOW CAN YOU HAVE SUCH A CREEPY IMAGINATION?
I SEE... BUT IS THAT REALLY SOMETHING TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT?
YOU'RE NOT A CHILD ANYMORE, OFFICER.
WELL, I AM CONCERNED, AND YOU CAN'T STOP ME!
OKAY THEN...
WAY TOO CLOSE!
OH!
I HAVE TO CONTINUE MY SEARCH NOW!
SEE YOU AROUND, AND BE CAREFUL!
'KAY.

IT SEEMS REALLY TOUGH ON HIM...
...
フラフラ
DID I DO ANYTHING WRONG...?
SIGH...
DID I...
!
GRRRR
GRRRR
...!!
BUT...
IS THAT IT!?
HUH...

!!
RAWR !!
IS THAT REALLY A DOG?
GRRR
HEY, ARAGAMI, SOMEONE FOR YOU HERE!
HUH?
NICE TO MEET YOU, MR. ARAGAMI.
MY NAME IS SHIRO YOSHIWARA.
OH, I SEE!

WE'RE NOT LIKE THAT ANYMORE!! I'VE ALWAYS HATED THAT GUY!
OH, REALLY?
NO.
YOU'RE KOJIRO'S FRIEND, AREN'T YOU? WERE YOU SENT BY HIM?
...THE PERSON KOJIRO MADE HIS OLDER BROTHER.
I JUST WANTED TO SEE WHAT KIND OF PERSON YOU WERE...
HI!!
!!
HELLO~
I REMEMBER THEM AS A POOR-LOOKING FAMILY THAT WAS NEW IN TOWN.
IT WAS TEN YEARS AGO THAT I MET HIM...
...
...BE NICE TO HIM HUH...?
AND THIS IS MY SON KOJIRO! HE'S A YEAR YOUNGER THAN YOU!! BE NICE TO HIM, OKAY?
O-OKAY...
YOU'RE ARAGAMI'S BOY, RIGHT?? I'M HARUTARO YAMADA!

I AGREED TO PLAY WITH HIM IN ORDER TO GET CLOSE TO HIS SISTER.
FATHER ...?
LEAVE IT TO ME, FATHER!!
THIS IS HIS YOUNGER SISTER, AGURI.
BE NICE TO HER TOO!
WHOA! HIS SISTER IS SO CUTE!
HOW COULD ANYONE BE NICE TO THIS BRAT!?
BACK THEN, HE WAS AS BRATTY AS KIDS COME.
WHAT!?
I'M NOT TAKING NO ORDERS FROM SOME SUPER SAIYAN!
A/N: I HAD NO OTHER REFS TO GO WITH >_<
YOU SHOULD BE HAPPY!
LITTLE BROT-HER...?
ALL RIGHT, FROM TODAY ON, YOU'LL BE MY LITTLE BROTHER!
WHOA!! COOL ARMOR!!
HEY, THAT'S MY DAD'S TREASURE!!
HEY, THOSE ARE MINE!
HEY, YOU HAVE SO MANY SNACKS IN YOUR HOUSE.
MY HAIR IS COOL! AND DON'T MAKE FUN OF SUPER SAIYANS! THEY'RE FROM THE PLANET VEGETA AND THEY'RE SO CRAZY STRONG THAT...

EVERY TIME HE CAME TO MY HOUSE, HE WREAKED HAVOC.
MOTHER'S DRESSER !!
HEY, SABU-ROUTA, LOOK AT THAT!
AND ON TOP OF THAT, ONE DAY...
MOMMY...!!
IT FITS ME PER-FECT-LY!!
YOU LIKE HIM, RIGHT? I'LL GO GET IT FOR YOU.
ARE YOU TRYING TO IMPRESS ME? BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT!!
DOESN'T THAT FRUIT LOOK LIKE SABU-CHAN*?
I DON'T SEE THE RESEM-BLANCE AT ALL!
*NICKNAME FOR SINGER-SONGWRITER SABURO KITAJIMA, WHOSE NOSTRILS ARE A PROMINENT FEATURE
KO-JIRO !!
GAGHH !!
KO-JIRO !!
WHO-OPS!

WHAAH!! I'M GONNA DROWN! HELP ME!!
うわあ
I CAN'T SWIM EITHER !!
I- I CAN'T SWIM!!
HELP ME, SABU-ROUTA!
HUH ?
UH...
ズルッ
!!
OH NO, OH NO...!!
THIS RIVER ISN'T DEEP ENOUGH TO DROWN IN, BUT STILL...!!
DID I JUST HEAR AN "AAAH!"?
A SCREAM ?
AAAHHH!!
...WAS COINCI-DENTALLY HEARD BY ADULTS NEARBY.
AND I WAS RESCUED A BIT FURTHER DOWN-STREAM.
THERE HE IS!!
HE WAS SAVED.
THIS UNUSUALLY ECSTATIC SCREAM THAT ESCAPED MY MOUTH AT THAT MOMENT...
AAAAAAAHH!!
SABU-ROU-TA!!

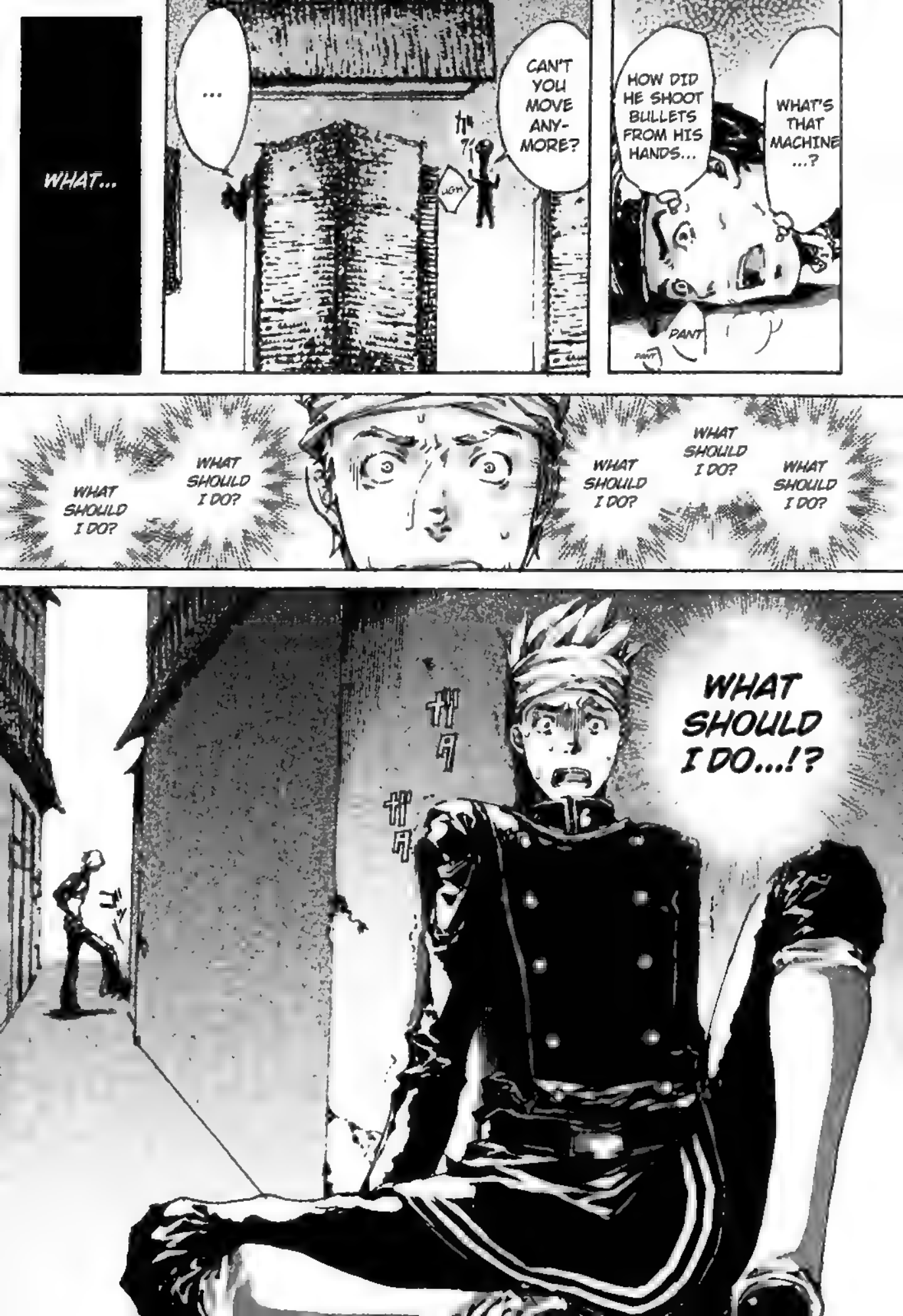
ARAGAMI, IT'S YOUR SHIFT!
WHAT I WANTED TO SAY WAS, NOTHING EVER GOOD HAPPENS WHEN HE'S AROUND...
RIGHT, RIGHT.
GAHHHHHHH
GAHHHHHHH
GAHHHHH
SPLUSH
ONCE I WAS RESCUED, I CLUNG TO MY MOTHER AND MADE A BRILLIANT SCENE BY EXHIBITING ALL MANNERS OF BODILY SECRETIONS.
AFTER THAT, I BEGAN TO BE REFERRED TO AS 'THE DOUBLE FOUNTAIN', LIKE SOME TOURIST ATTRACTION...
HEY, ARE YOU LAUGHING AT ME?
MR. ARA-GAMI!
WELL, THAT'S THE GIST OF IT.
AS I THOUGHT, THE WIND SMELLS DIFFERENT.
...
7

NGH !!
RAWRRRR
ISN'T THAT...
...A HUMAN HAND...?
GR RRR
AS I THOUGHT! THAT ISN'T A DOG!!
PANT
PANT
!!!
YELP

AH, I'M SORRY FOR THAT!
HE CAUSED QUITE A RUCKUS.
...!?
!?
I HAD QUITE A HARD TIME FINDING HIM, BUT...
I'LL TAKE HIM HOME NOW.
SO... ARE YOU THAT THING'S OWNER?
HM? YES, I AM.
WOW, YOU LOOK STRONG, AND YOU'RE KIND OF HAND-SOME TOO.
HEY...

WHAT WERE YOU...
!!
OHH, YES, I APOLO-GIZE.
WHAT IS THAT THING? SEVEN PEOPLE HAD TO DIE BECAUSE OF ...!!
ビリリ
ビリリ
HAHAHA
I'M SURE HE'LL STAY PUT FOR A WHILE NOW.
!
FOR-GIVE ME.
ズル
BUT DON'T WORRY, YOU'LL BE THE LAST ONE TO DIE THIS TIME.
NN GH
カラン
WHEN DID HE GET ME ...!?
...!?
AGH!

AAHH !!
SCREEE
!!
AAAARGH!
I'LL BE TAKING THOSE LEGS.
...GEE, AREN'T YOU A POLICE OFFI-CER?
THAT WAS PATHETIC. YOU'RE NOT NEARLY GOOD ENOUGH.


WHAT...
...
CAN'T YOU MOVE ANY-MORE?
UGH
HOW DID HE SHOOT BULLETS FROM HIS HANDS...
WHAT'S THAT MACHINE ...?
PANT
PANT
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
WHAT SHOULD I DO...!?

B-BMP!
B-BMP
B-BMP
THERE'S NO WAY I COULD STAND UP TO THAT...
WHO IS THIS GUY!? IF EVEN KOJIRO CAN'T BEAT HIM, HE MUST BE PRETTY STRONG...
HERE I WAS ON MY DAILY ROUNDS...
AND THEN I CAME ACROSS THIS!
IF I GO BACK FOR HELP, IT'LL TAKE US AT LEAST TWENTY MINUTES TO GET BACK.
...HE MIGHT BE DEAD BEFORE THEN...
ガシッ
HE MIGHT DIE...
ガッ
ARGGH!!
I SHOULD HEAD BACK TO DIVISION AND ASK FOR BACKUP...
NO ONE WILL BE SAVED.
B-BMP
IT'LL BE FUTILE...
BUT IF I GO OUT THERE NOW, IT'S CERTAIN THAT WE'LL BOTH BE DEAD.
B-BMP
B-BMP
SABU-ROUTA!

I DON'T WANT TO DIE!
PANT
I DON'T WANT TO...!
PANT
SABU-ROUTA!
SABU-ROUTA !!
NO, I DON'T WANT TO DIE!
I DON'T WANT TO!
PANT
AND ON TOP OF THAT, I'M A COWARD...!!
LOOK AT ME, I CAN'T DO ANYTHING...
HE SUCKS, BUT HE THINKS HE'S SO GOOD BECAUSE HE'S RICH!
HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS UNTIL YOU CAME, YOU KNOW.
THEM ...!!
HEY, KOJI-RO!
STOP PLAYING WITH THAT SABU-ROUTA!
WHA-HAHA!!
GROSS!!
HEY, DID YOU HEAR ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED? HE GOT WASHED AWAY BY A RIVER AND PEED HIS PANTS OVER IT!
HAHAHA !!
HE USED TO BE BULLIED, ACTUALLY!

YEAH, YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT!
IT WAS REALLY GROSS!
...
KOJIRO ...
B-BMP!
B-BMP!
...
MY HEAD...
IT'S SPINNING...
I...
...FEEL LIKE THRO-WING UP...
PANT
PANT
BUT ...
HE'S REALLY COOL!
EVEN THOUGH HE WAS SO SCARED, HE STILL JUMPED IN TO SAVE ME!!
ISN'T THAT AWE-SOME?

I'M HIS LITTLE BROTHER, YOU KNOW?
I WOULD LOVE TO BECOME MORE LIKE HIM!
ISN'T THAT COOL?
NO...
I DIDN'T JUMP IN TO SAVE YOU AT ALL!
THAT'S NOT WHAT REALLY HAPPENED. THAT TIME, I MERELY SLIPPED!

BUT...
I WAS NEVER ABLE TO TELL HIM THAT.
AFTER THAT, I WANTED TO BECOME THE PERFECT BROTHER TO HIM, BUT...
HOW ABOUT THIS?
I DUNNO EITHER...
...THAT DIDN'T WORK OUT...
I COULD NOT HELP HIM.
I CAN'T, I'M SORRY! I CAN'T!
SABU-ROUTA! MAKE THEM GO AWAY!!
WOOF!!
WOOF!!
WOOF!!
WE GOT OLDER, AND I BEGAN TO FEEL EVEN WORSE COMPARED TO HIM.
AHAHA
I DIDN'T LIKE TO ADMIT IT, BUT I WAS JEALOUS.
I THOUGHT GETTING MYSELF PROMOTED WOULD HELP,
BUT THAT DIDN'T GO THAT WELL EITHER.
I JUST FELT SO ASHAMED TO BE JEALOUS OF MY YOUNGER BROTHER!
I HATED MYSELF, BUT NOT BEING ABLE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT...
I GRADUALLY STARTED HATING ON HIM.
BUT REALLY...
MAYBE I WAS JUST AFRAID...
...AFRAID OF HIM FINDING OUT THAT I WAS JEALOUS.

I WAS SO AFRAID OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN...
YOU'RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO BE MY BIG BROTHER.
MAYBE ONE DAY, HE'D FIND OUT HOW PATHETIC I REALLY WAS, AND HE'D...
!
SO... I FIGURED IT'D BE BETTER IF I KEPT A DISTANCE FROM HIM.
WHAT? HE PASSED OUT? LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH THEN.
THE NEXT ONE WILL BE THE LAST.
HELP ME, SABUROUTA!!
B-BMP!
B-BMP!
B-BMP!
B-BMP!
KO-JIRO... !!

...WHAT HAVE I BEEN TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?
UP TO THIS POINT...
I'M GOING TO DROWN!
HELP ME, SABUROUTA!!
A WEAK POWERLESS GUY LIKE ME...
YOU'RE SUCH AN IDIOT AND SUCH A WEAKLING!!
ウキ
ウキッ
BEFORE I THREW MY PRIDE AWAY,
ヒソ
ヒソ
AND BEFORE EVERYONE STARTED LOOKING DOWN ON ME...
WHAT HAD I BEEN TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?
I'D LOVE TO...
...BECOME MORE LIKE SABUROUTA!
HELP ME, SABUROUTA!!

MAN ...!!
OH
AA-
A-
-AAA-
AAAA-
AH
!!!
WHA-
-AA
AH!!
!!
KOJIRO!!

SOME-
BODY
HELP
US
!!!
!!
!!!
!!
...AND WHO ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE?
M-MY...
HAH
HAH
MY VOICE ...
WHEE
HAH
WHEE
IT WON'T COME OUT!!
...I-I'LL SHOW YOU...
...MY GREATEST SKILL...!!
WHEE
WHEE
I-
I'LL SHOW YOU...
NOW !!
HUH?
DO IT!!
DO IT!!
S-

!!?
ANYONE!!
ARGHHHH
JUST ONCE!
JUST ONCE, I WANTED TO...
S-
STOP THAT AL- READY !!!
!!

HUH?
I FOLLOWED THE SCENT HERE, BUT I COULDN'T GET THE EXACT LOCATION.
THANK YOU, MR. ARA-GAMI!
!!
HEY!
...IS THAT YOU, SHIRO?
HMM ...
...THAT THINGS WOULD TURN OUT THIS BAD...
BUT ...
I NEVER THOUGHT ...

'EAH.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
HUH!? NO WAY!!
WAIT, STOP THAT !!
OH, MAN!!

TOO SLOW.
SEE?
AHH
UGH !!
AGHHH
AHH

!
ズルッ
AH
SO YOU WERE FULLY EQUIPPED AFTER ALL
BUT EVEN SO, DID YOU REALLY THINK YOU COULD WIN!?
P-PLEASE DON'T KILL ME!
BRO-THER!
AHAHA, I WOULDN'T KILL MY OWN CUTE LITTLE BROTHER!
BUT YOU'RE SUCH A BAD BOY, ATTACKING ME LIKE THAT!
I-I'M SORRY!

COME BACK TO ME, SHIRO!
IF YOU DO, I'LL FORGIVE YOU.
REAL-LY...?
...EVEN FOR EVERY-THING ELSE?
HAHA! OF COURSE!
KNOWING YOU, IT'S PROBABLY JUST A PHASE...
ズグ
...ALL AN ACT HUH...
USING YOUR CHARM AND ALL...
...SAME FOR YOU, ISN'T IT?
BUT, IN CLOSE RANGE LIKE THIS,
I HAVE THE UPPER HAND.

CAN YOU REALLY GO AS FAR AS TO KILL ME!?
WE'RE BRO-THERS!
SO, WAS THAT FALL ON PURPOSE TOO...!?
ALL THE MORE REASON TO...
!
IT WAS A SCREAM FOR HELP!
!
THIS WAY!! THIS IS WHERE THE VOICE CAME FROM!!
HAHAHA
TSK
'TILL NEXT TIME, SHIRO.

HIM ...?
HOW CAN THAT BE...?
HE SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO STAND!

WHAT DID YOU DO TO SABU-ROUTA AND SHIRO!?
SPLUTTER
YOU !!
!!
ARGH !

GH!
...
OH! THERE!!
THERE'S A MAN ON THE GROUND!!
YOU'RE INJURED...
I'M FINE, OFFICER. YOU SHOULDN'T MOVE AROUND SO MUCH...!
HOW IS SABUROUTA?
SHIRO...
HEY YOU, THOSE ARE SOME SERIOUS WOUNDS!!
THANK YOU, SHIRO...
OFFICER!!
THANK GOD...
I SEE...
HE'S JUST UNCONSCIOUS.

IT'S ONLY NATURAL, THAT THE THINGS YOU HATE THE MOST...
...ARE THE THINGS YOU'RE LEAST LIKELY TO FORGET.
...
I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT GUY, AND QUICK...
HE'S TAKING THINGS WAY TOO FAR...
I HAD A GREAT CATCH TODAY!
I FOUND WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR!
YUP, I'M DONE FOR TODAY.
DID YOU FINISH YOUR ROUNDS?
HEY!
ANRI!
HEY, YOU INJURED YOUR LEG!
IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE I LAST SAW YOU BLEEDING!
YEAH, THAT'S THE THING.
I RAN INTO THE MOST INTERES-TING GUY TODAY.

HUH!?
ISN'T THAT BAD!? HE SAW THE DOG!
NO, I HAVEN'T KILLED HIM YET.
HE FOUGHT THAT DOG WITHOUT DYING.
WOW, AND IS THAT WHY YOU HAD TROUBLE KILLING HIM?
DON'T WORRY. EVEN IF IT'D LEAK, THE POLICE WON'T DO ANYTHING.
A PORTION OF THE HIGHER RANKS HAVE BEEN COVERING UP THE EXISTENCE OF "THE COUNTRY OF FLESH".
AND BESIDES, HE'S A FASCINATING GUY.
I DESTROYED HIS KNEES AND HE STILL STOOD UP.
PRETTY TOUGH HUH?
HE SEEMS TO BE A FRIEND OF MY LITTLE BROTHER.
SO I WANNA TAKE MY TIME WITH HIM.
AHAHA !!

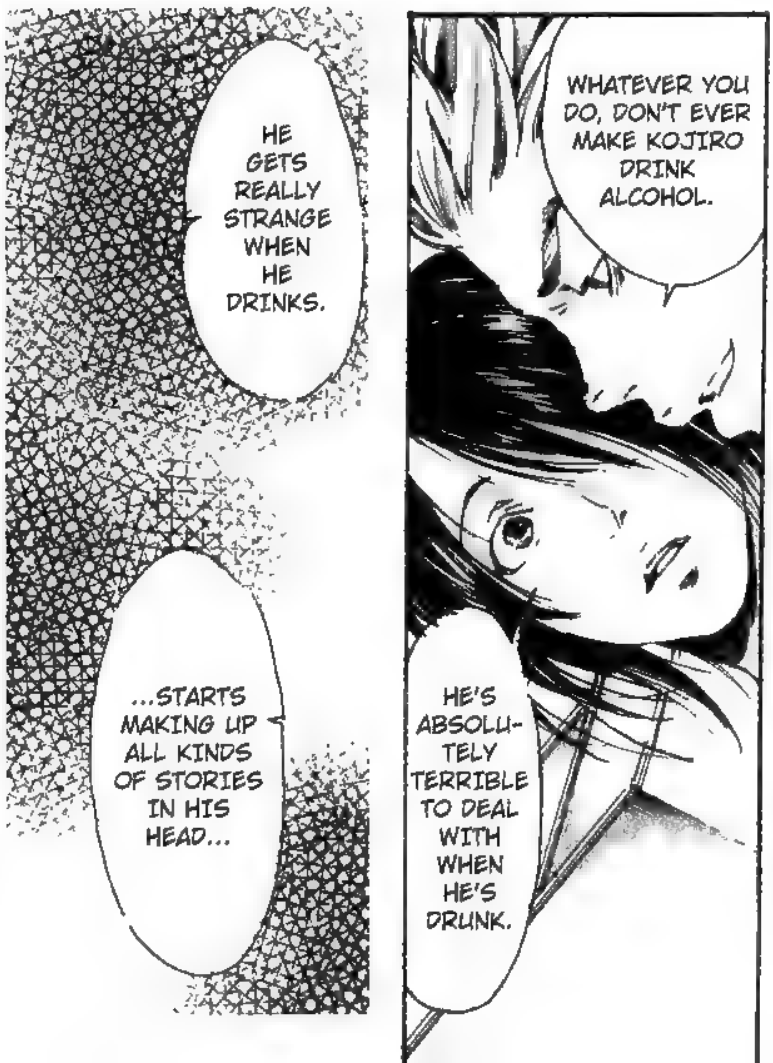
IN CELEBRATION OF KOJIRO'S TOTAL RECOVERY!
アハハ
IT'S MY TREAT, EAT UP!
豚串
AH, I SEE. PISSING ME OFF AS USUAL, HUH?
COMPLETE RECOVERY IN A SINGLE MONTH... THAT'S SOME SERIOUS REGENERATION POWER.
GOTCHA! I'M ALREADY EATING YOUR PORTION TOO!
...LET'S KEEP THAT FOR ANOTHER DAY!
...
OF COURSE WE WILL !!
AND THAT BLONDE GUY, BUT...
IN TIME, WE'LL DEFINITELY HAVE TO CAPTURE THAT DOG-THING...
MR. ARAGAMI HAS SURE CHEERED UP...
HAHA, EARLY BIRD GETS THE WORM!
HEY!! THAT'S MINE!!
LET'S EAT TO OUR HEART'S CONTENT!

AFTER THE INCIDENT...
KOJI-RO...
HUH?
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I JUST SLIPPED AND FELL INTO THE RIVER.
YOU WERE TRYING TO SWIM TOWARDS ME THE BEST YOU COULD.
I REMEM-BER THAT CLEARLY.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, SABU-ROUTA?
MAYBE YOU WEREN'T AWARE OF IT, BUT...
HUH ...?
IS THAT WHAT HAD BEEN WORRYING YOU ALL THAT TIME?
NOT BEING ABLE TO SAVE ME, DOES THAT DIS-QUALIFY YOU AS MY BIG BROTHER?
WHENEVER I GOT INTO TROUBLE, YOU'D ALWAYS RUN AWAY WITH ME, YOU'D ALWAYS CRY WITH ME.
YOU NEVER ABANDONED ME AT ALL, NOT EVEN ONCE!

!
IT'S BECAUSE... I CARE ABOUT HIM.
BUT I'M NOT FRIENDS WITH HIM BECAUSE HE'S STRONG.
FOR EXAMPLE. SHIRO HERE IS MY FRIEND.
AND THAT'S THE SAME FOR YOU, SABUROUTA.
IS THAT NOT ENOUGH?
WON'T YOU BE MY BIG BROTHER ANY-MORE?
WHY DOES EVERY SINGLE THING YOU SAY HAVE TO BE SO EMBAR-RASSING!?
UGH!!
SHUT UP ALREADY! DON'T SAY ANOTHER THING!!
...
S-

AS I THOUGHT, HE'S AN INTERESTING GUY.
THEN STOP PISSING ME OFF LIKE THAT!!
DO YOU HATE ME THAT MUCH YOU HAVE TO PUNCH ME!? I'M INJURED, YOU KNOW!?
UH ...
A-HAHA !!

HE CAN CAPTURE PEOPLE'S HEARTS WITH NO INTENTION FOR PROFIT.


HE GETS REALLY STRANGE WHEN HE DRINKS.
...STARTS MAKING UP ALL KINDS OF STORIES IN HIS HEAD...
WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T EVER MAKE KOJIRO DRINK ALCOHOL.
HE'S ABSOLUTELY TERRIBLE TO DEAL WITH WHEN HE'S DRUNK.
THOUGH HE DOESN'T REALIZE IT HIMSELF.
I MUST SAY, HIS TECHNIQUE IS AMAZINGLY CONVINCING ...
HEY SHIRO. LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT SOMETHING.
HUH?

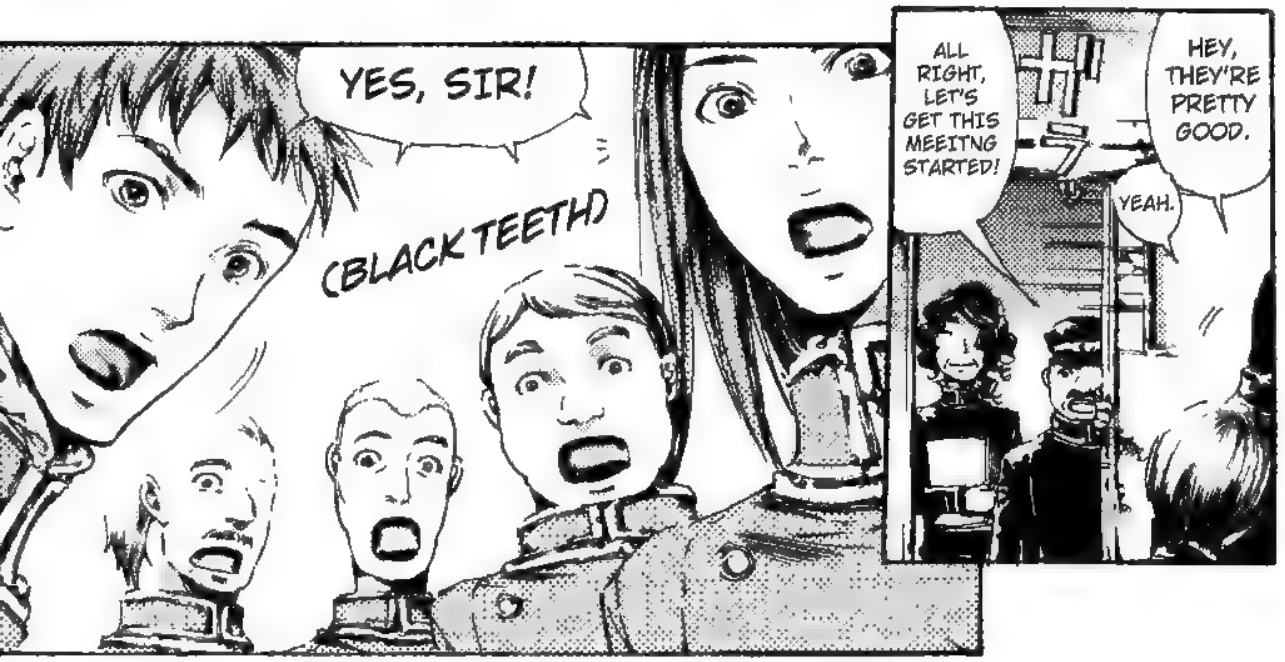
HE ALREADY STARTED DRINKING THOUGH.
...HE CHASED ME AROUND ALL NIGHT.
HEY, STAND STILL!!
REAL SWORD
AND JUST SO YOU KNOW, HIS PARENTS WERE TOTALLY HEALTHY
UH-HUH...
ONE TIME, HE WAS CONVINCED THAT I KILLED HIS PARENTS, AND HE HAD TO AVENGE THEM.
...WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU TWO ARE DOING?
H-HUH!?
...
...
SABURIA!! WHY ISN'T DINNER READY YET!?
!?
SHIRO! AREN'T YOU 14 ALREADY ??
I WANT TO SEE YOU STUDYING AT THAT DESK, YOU GOOD-FOR-NOTHING!
IT LOOKS LIKE THE STORY OF THE DAY HAS FRAMED HIM AS 'THE STRICT FATHER', ME AS HIS WIFE, AND YOU AS HIS 'GOOD-FOR-NOTHING SON'!
I SEE. THAT SURE IS A PROBLEM.

YOU'RE MAKING IT WORSE, YOU DUMB-ASS!
WHY DON'T YOU SHUT UP, DAD!? YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO TELL ME WHAT TO DO!!
HUH? WHAT'S THIS GUY TALKING ABOUT!?
YOU HAVE TO KNOW THAT, ONCE I'M GIVEN A ROLE, I WILL DO IT JUSTICE!
HEY, HEY!! YOU DON'T NEED TO ADD TO THE DRAMA! YOU NEED TO STOP WATCHING THOSE SOAP OPERA'S!!
STOP TAKING IT OUT ON MY MOM, YOU PIECE OF XXX! AND BY THE WAY, THE CHILD IN MOM'S BELLY IS MINE!
O-OH MY, I DIDN'T MEAN TO...
SABU-RIA! I DON'T WANT TO HEAR THAT KIND OF LANGU-AGE!
STRANGE CUST-OMERS TODAY...
BRING IT ON, YOU PIECE OF XXX THAT CALLS HIMSELF A FATHER!
YOU THINK YOU CAN LAY YOUR HANDS ON MY WOMAN AND GET AWAY WITH IT!?
STOP IT, BOTH OF YOU!
END
WHO ARE THOSE 'VIEWERS' YOU SPEAK OF!? AND WHAT DOES THAT MAKE US, HUH!?
THE VIEWERS ALWAYS LIKE THINGS TO BE A LITTLE SCANDALOUS.

WHAT IS THAT ...?
...?
!
カラン カラン
CHAPTER IV
CAT-LADY...
CAT-LADY ...
HELP ME...
LADY
CAT-LADY ...
CAT-LADY
HELP ME ...
WHA-AH!!
...
WHAAAAAAH!!

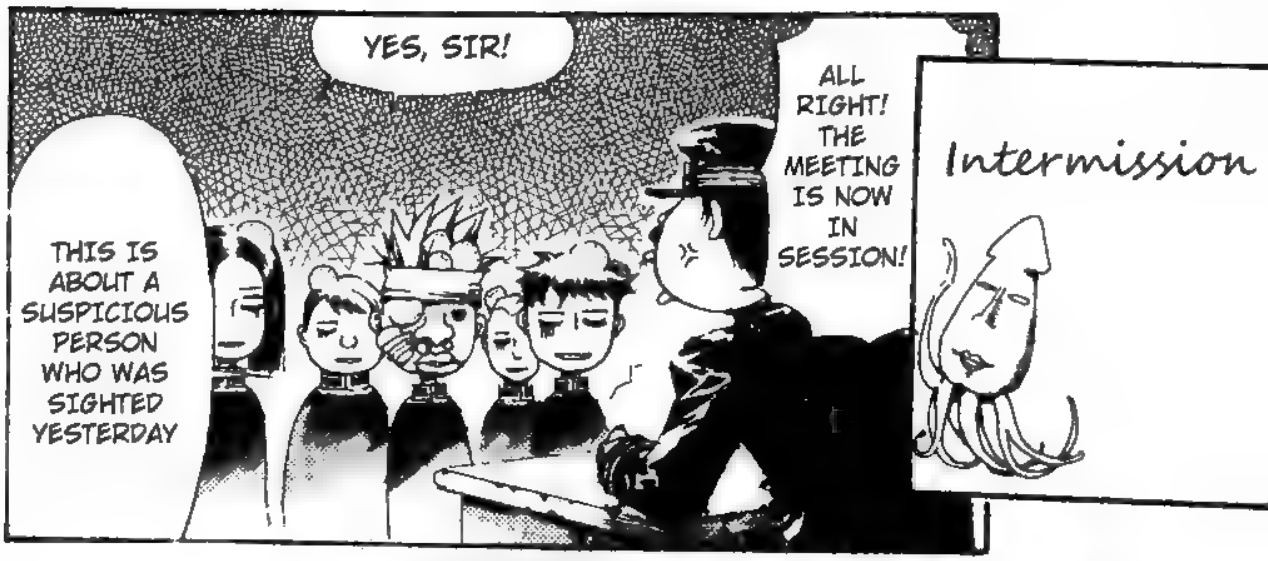
CHAPTER IV
BUTTERFLY GAZERS

TADAA! WE JUST SHIPPED THESE CANDIES IN!
THERE'S LOTS!! HELP YOUR-SELVES!
JUST TRY ONE!
HOW DO THEY TASTE?
WHY DOES YOUR PLACE ALWAYS DO BUSINESS WITH WEIRD THINGS LIKE THESE?
THEY'RE REALLY BLACK...


YES, SIR!
(BLACK TEETH)
ALL RIGHT, LET'S GET THIS MEEITNG STARTED!
HEY, THEY'RE PRETTY GOOD.
YEAH.

EEEE-EEEEK!
E-

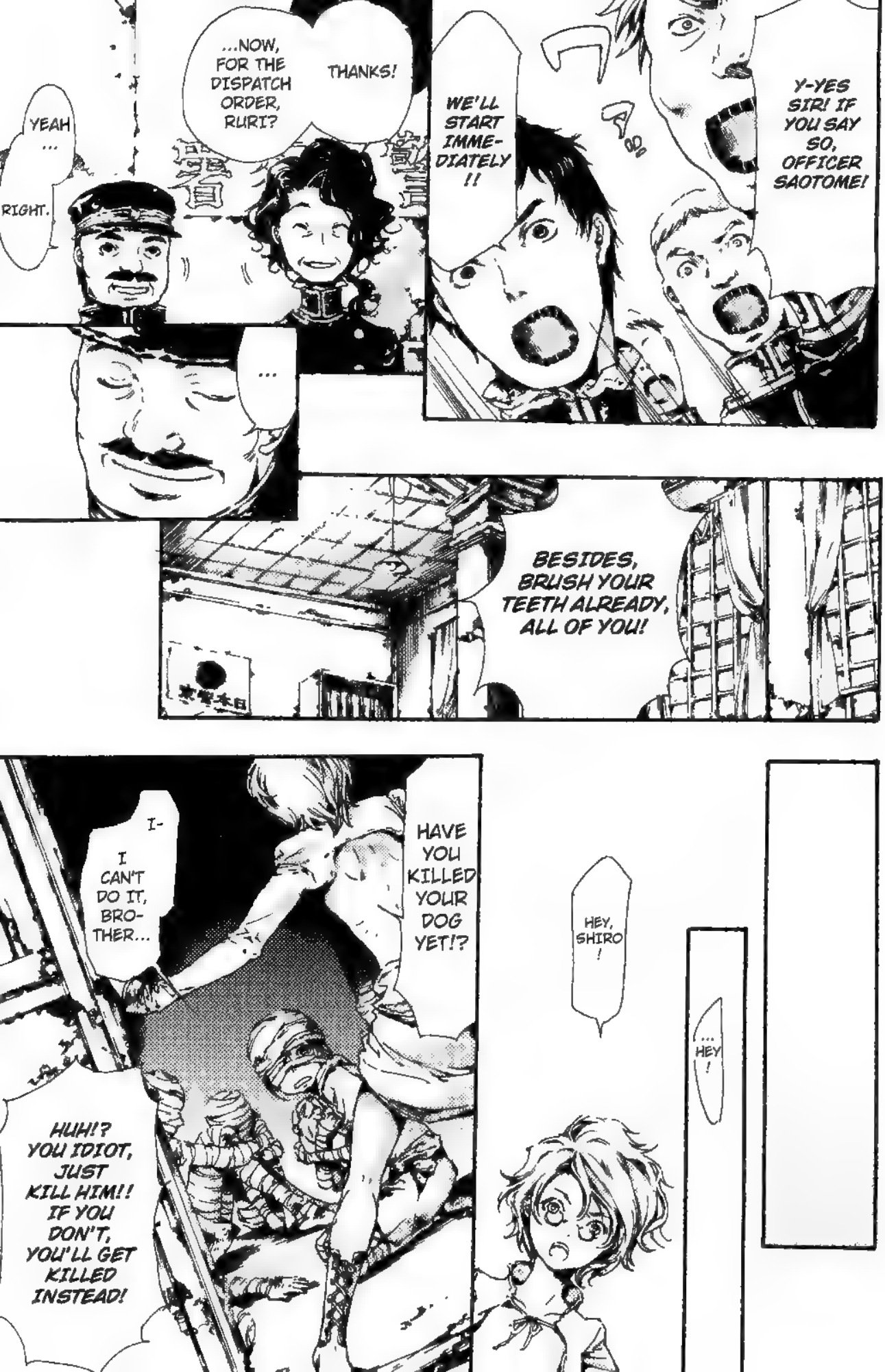
HUH!? YOU'LL REGRET THIS!
WHAHAHA! YOU ALL FELL FOR IT! THEY'RE CANDIES MADE OF SQUID INK!
WHAT'S UP WITH MY TEETH!?
CALM DOWN, RURI...
ALL MY OFFICERS HAVE BLACK TEETH! WHAT KIND OF CURSE IS THIS?
YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY WITH THIS, SQUIDFACE!


YES, SIR!
ALL RIGHT! THE MEETING IS NOW IN SESSION!
THIS IS ABOUT A SUSPICIOUS PERSON WHO WAS SIGHTED YESTERDAY
Intermission

KOJIRO, FILL EVERYONE IN WITH THE DETAILS!
YES, SIR!
THE SAID INDIVIDUAL WAS SEEN ROAMING THE STREETS AT NIGHT, ALWAYS REPEATING THE WORD 'CATLADY'.
SHE HAS NO HANDS OR FEET, AND CRAWLS ON THE GROUND. SHE'S BEEN SEEN IN THE EAST DISTRICT FIVE TIMES.

WELL...
SAO-TOME, ANY THOUGHTS?
HM...
THERE SEEMS TO BE NOTHING HARMFUL ABOUT HER.
APART FROM HER UNUSUAL APPEAR-ANCE,
ヒソヒソ
NO IDEA.
WHAT'S A CATLADY? SOME DEMON?
THERE HAVEN'T BEEN ANY REAL VICTIMS, HAVE THERE?
IS THIS SUCH A SERIOUS CASE?
HUH? IS SAOTOME IN CHARGE OF THIS CASE...?
I WANT HER FOUND AS FAST AS POSSIBLE,
BEFORE ANYTHING HAPPENS TO HER.
I THINK WE SHOULD MOBILIZE MORE THAN HALF OF OUR FORCE IMMEDIATELY TO SEARCH FOR THIS PERSON.
HAVE WE FORGOTTEN, GENTLEMEN?
DO WE NEED THAT MANY PEOPLE FOR JUST A...
MORE THAN HALF!?
ペラ!

THERE'S ALWAYS THE CHANCE THAT A SMALL INCIDENT LIKE THIS...
IS JUST THE TIP OF AN ICEBERG.
FIVE TIMES IN SUCH A SHORT TIME.
A RATHER LIMITED AREA...
A WEAK BODY...
POSSIBLY FROM STARVATION ...
CORRUPTION IN HER PERSONALITY...
POSSIBLY HAVING A PAST OF ABUSE...
INCOMPREHENSIBLE SPEECH.
NO ATTEMPT TO DISGUISE.
IMPULSIVE.
UNPLANNED.
CONFUSED.
WHICH MEANS ...
I THINK SHE MUST PROBABLY STILL BE IN THE SAME AREA AS SHE WAS SEEN YESTERDAY.
HERE!
...
THE SUSPECT IS TOO WEAK TO GO VERY FAR. IF SHE'S HIDING, SHE'LL BE SOMEWHERE EASY TO FIND. SHE PROBABLY WON'T HAVE CLEAN APPEARANCE.
THAT'LL BE ALL! I'M COUNTING ON YOU GUYS!


Y-YES SIR! IF YOU SAY SO, OFFICER SAOTOME!
WE'LL START IMME-DIATELY !!
...NOW, FOR THE DISPATCH ORDER, RURI?
THANKS!
YEAH ... RIGHT.
...
BESIDES, BRUSH YOUR TEETH ALREADY, ALL OF YOU!
HEY, SHIRO !
... HEY !
HAVE YOU KILLED YOUR DOG YET!?
I- I CAN'T DO IT, BRO-THER...
HUH!? YOU IDIOT, JUST KILL HIM!! IF YOU DON'T, YOU'LL GET KILLED INSTEAD!

THE OLDER GUYS WANT TO EAT HIM, SO JUST DO IT ALREADY.
YOU FELT SORRY FOR IT BECAUSE IT WAS HURT, BUT YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO PROTECT IT TILL THE END ANYWAY!
SO IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT FOR PICKING IT UP.
AFTER ALL, WHERE WE LIVE ISN'T A GOOD PLACE.
YOU SHOULDN'T GO AROUND CONCERNING YOURSELF WITH OTHERS.
SO, NOW, KILL IT AL-READY!
NO... I DON'T WANT TO! I CAN'T DO IT...
...
A DREAM ...?

BROTHER WAS REALLY HERE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD THE OTHER DAY...
BUT NOW I THINK OF IT...
OH MAN ...
!!!
GOOD MOR-NING, SHIRO.
B-
BRO-
-THER !!

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT'S NOT DOWN YOUR ALLEY?
HAHA, COLLECTING INFORMATION IS RIGHT DOWN MY ALLEY, YOU KNOW, SHIRO.
H-HOW DID YOU KNOW I WAS HERE ...?
YOU MEANT TO KILL ME IF I CAME, DIDN'T YOU?
DO YOU HAVE A HEART AT ALL...
I'M SURPRISED AT HOW MANY BLADES YOU MANAGED TO HIDE IN THIS HOUSE.
THERE'S LIKE... GETTING MY LITTLE BROTHER TO BEHAVE ...
...
YOU JUST.. DROPPED BY...?
I'M NOT CARRYING ANY WEAPONS EITHER...
I JUST DROPPED BY BECAUSE I WAS IN THE AREA!
BUT, LET'S NOT GET INTO THAT TODAY, ALL RIGHT?

YOU'VE GOT A NICE PLACE HERE. I'M IMPRESSED!
!
I'M NOT SURE HOW YOU CAN FIND PEOPLE TO BUY ANY OF THIS WEIRD STUFF THOUGH...
BUT I LIKE THE THINGS YOU MAKE.
...
HEY, CAN YOU DRAW ME SOMETHING?
...NOW?
YEAH!
...
AL-RIGHT ...
EEK!!

W-WAIT A SECOND! YOU'RE DRAWING ON ME!?
YES.
WHOA!
HEY... YOU...
WAIT, THIS IS WRONG! THIS IS TOO EROTIC!!
HEY!!
...SHUT UP.
STOP GETTING SO EXCITED
!!
OR I CAN'T CONCENTRATE.

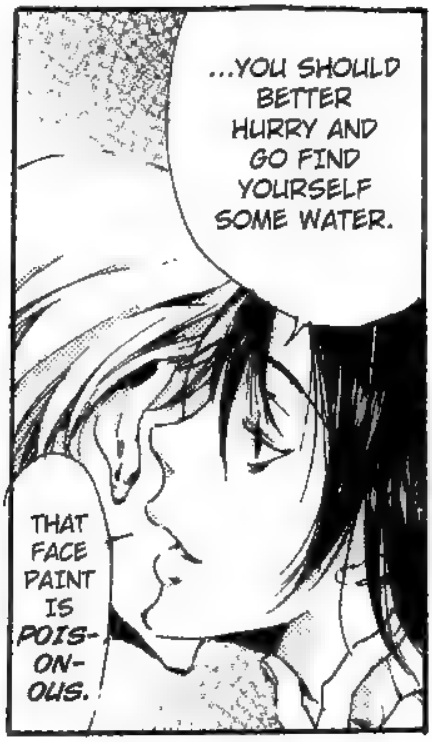
I'M HAPPY THAT YOU GREW UP TO HAVE A SADISTIC SIDE LIKE THAT.
I WONDER WHY IT EXCITES ME SO MUCH.
SHUT UP, YOU LITTLE M.*
*MASOCHIST
IT'S DONE. 'KAY.
...
I CAN'T SEE WHAT YOU DREW ON MY FACE.
GIVE ME A MIRROR.
NO, I WON'T SHOW YOU.
HUH!? YOU BETTER NOT HAVE DRAWN ANYTHING FUNNY!
IT'S A PICTURE OF WHAT I WANT TO GIVE YOU, BROTHER.
...?
HM ...
NOW YOU'RE MAKING ME CUR-IOUS!

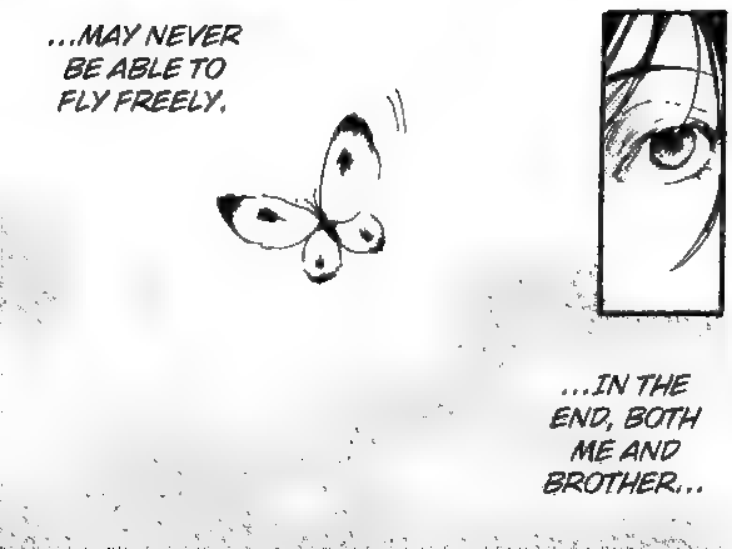
NOPE, IT'S JUST THAT THERE'S A GROUP IN THIS AREA WHO SENDS US MONEY AND LABOUR.
THE POLICE SEEM ABOUT TO CATCH THEM SOON,
SO THE PLAN IS TO GET RID OF THEM BEFORE THINGS GET COMPLI-CATED, HAHA!
OH, RIGHT! I CAN'T BE LATE!!
BE-SIDES, DON'T YOU HAVE ANYTHING BETTER TO DO?
...HAVE YOU STARTED WORKING IN THIS TOWN AS WELL?
BRO-THER, DO YOU STILL SING NOWA-DAYS?
HMM... ONCE IN A WHILE.
I LOVE IT WHEN YOU SING.
I LIKE YOUR HANDI-CRAFTS TOO.
BUT, ALL THE WHILE SINCE HE'S BEEN A CHILD, HE ALWAYS 'KNEW'.
CRUEL LIKE A CHILD, JUST LIKE HE USED TO BE...
AFTER ALL, WHERE WE LIVES ISN'T A GOOD PLACE.

I KNOW, BECAUSE YOU'RE JUST LIKE ME.
BUT, THIS 'PROPER' BUSINESS OF YOURS PROBABLY ISN'T GOING TO LAST VERY LONG.

SEE YOU ARO-UND !

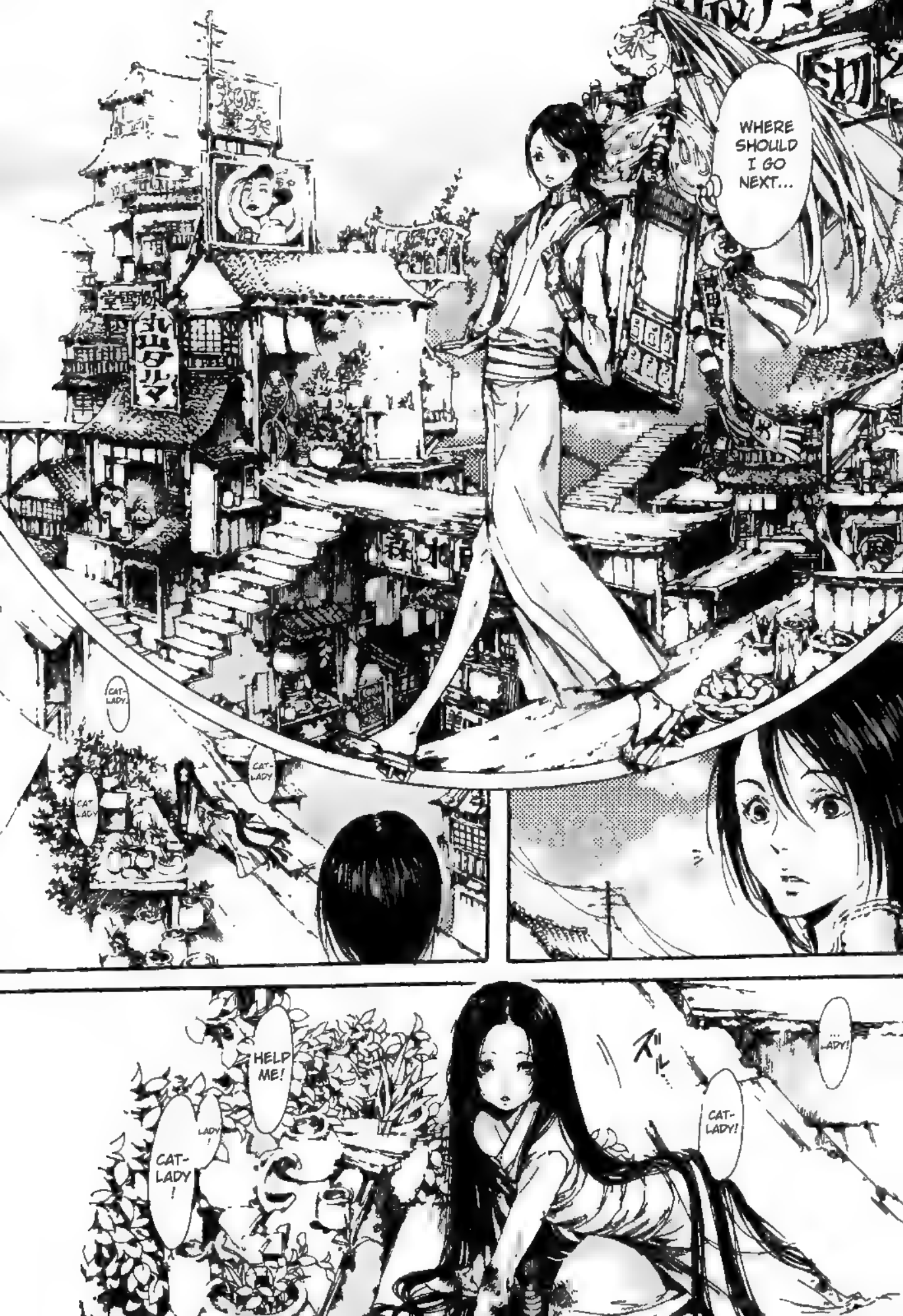
...YOU'RE SUCH A LITTLE BRAT.


...YOU SHOULD BETTER HURRY AND GO FIND YOURSELF SOME WATER.
THAT FACE PAINT IS POIS-ON-OUS.


...MAY NEVER BE ABLE TO FLY FREELY.
...IN THE END, BOTH ME AND BROTHER...

THIS ISN'T THE APPROPRIATE LOCATION TO GET RID OF MY BROTHER.
...I MUST LEAVE THIS PLACE SOON.
BUT... REGARDLESS, NOW THAT HE SHOWED UP...
THIS MIGHT BE THE FIRST TIME...
THAT I'VE TAKEN INTEREST IN ANYONE BESIDES BROTHER.
...COME TO THINK OF IT...
AT FIRST IT WAS ONLY CURIOSITY, BUT NOW I'VE REALLY INVOLVED MYSELF TOO FAR.
HE MAY NOT LOOK LIKE IT, BUT HE'S GOT A GOOD EAR FOR RUMORS.
THIS IS JUST A WASTE OF TIME!
NO, MAYBE SHIRO MIGHT BE ABLE TO GIVE US SOME INFOR-MATION.
HEY, KO-JIRO!

SIGN SAYS: 'VACANT HOUSE'.


WHERE SHOULD I GO NEXT...
CAT-LADY
CAT-LADY
CAT-LADY
HELP ME!
LADY
CAT-LADY!
ズル...
CAT-LADY!
...LADY!

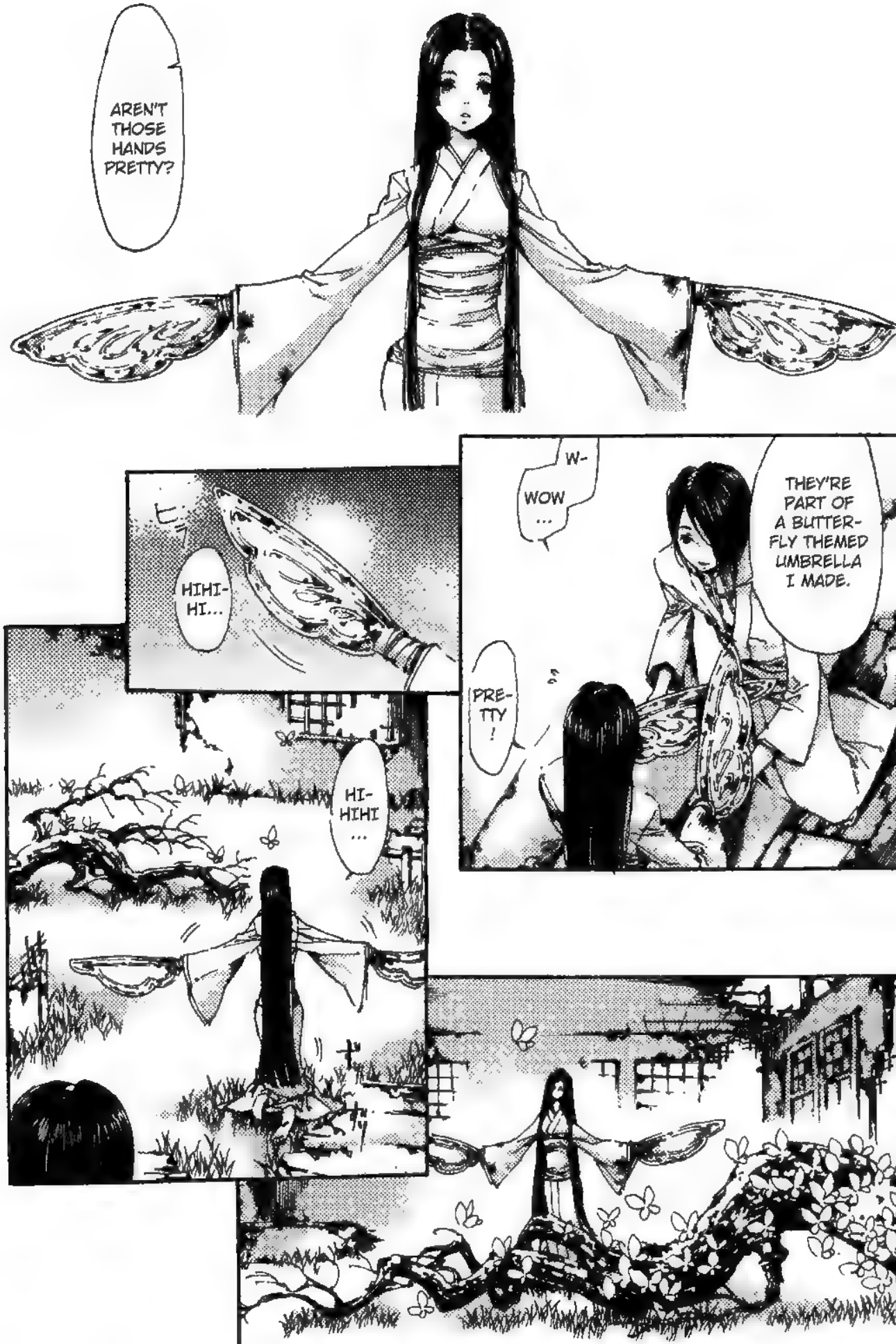
HEY, SAO-TOME.
WHAT IS THIS 'CATLADY'? SOME KIND OF DEMON?
...CAT-LADY ...!?
OH... IT'S A TERM USED AMONG CERTAIN NOTORIOUS HUMAN-TRAFFICKING ORGANI-ZATIONS.
TO PUT IT SIMPLY, IT REFERS TO A WOMAN WHO'S HANDS AND FEET HAVE BEEN CUT OFF.
...IT SYMBOLIZES THAT SHE'S LOST HER FREEDOM.
HUH!?
STRANGELY ENOUGH, THESE 'CAT WOMEN' SELL FOR A LOT AMONG COLLECTORS.
MY GUESS IS... THAT THIS SUSPECT IS A VICTIM WHO'S RUN AWAY FROM THE TRADERS.

HELP ME ...
I- I AM ... CAT-LADY ...!
BE-ING ... CHA-SED!
...
ONE THING WE CAN SAY FOR SURE...
IT'S THAT ONE OF THESE HUMAN-TRAFFICKING GROUPS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS CASE.
...
...GOTCHA!

...MAY FINALLY MOVE FORWARD THANKS TO THIS CASE.
THAT INVESTI-GATION WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON FOR ALL THESE YEARS...
IT'S NOT IMPOS-SIBLE.
...COULD IT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH 'THE HIDDEN KINGDOM'?
THIS IS AN ABAN-DONED HOUSE.
YOU'LL BE ABLE TO HIDE HERE FOR A WHILE.
THERE ARE PROBABLY STILL PEOPLE LOOKING FOR YOU.
LET'S ASSESS THE SITUATION BEFORE TAKING ACTION.

I'LL TAKE YOU TO THE POLICE.
THEY'LL PROTECT YOU.
SINCE YOU SAY YOU'RE A 'CAT LADY', THAT MUST MEAN YOU RAN AWAY FROM THE PEOPLE TRADERS, DIDN'T YOU?
I'M NOT GOING TO INVOLVE MYSELF TOO DEEPLY INTO THIS.
IT'LL BE FINE... I'LL HAND HER OVER TO SOMEONE SOON.
SHE CAN'T SPEAK PROPERLY.
DID SHE SUFFER ABUSE FROM THE TRADERS?
T-THANK Y-YOU!
OH!
BUTTER-FLY!

SINCE I WAS LITTLE ...
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN TRAPPED...
YES! I LIKE!
YOU LIKE BUTTER-FLIES?
HIHI!
SO... I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE...
FREE ... AS BUTTER-FLY!
BUTTER-FLY'S HANDS... PRETTY...
THEY CAN FLY...
...
THOUGH I CAN'T GIVE YOU REAL HANDS...
...


AREN'T THOSE HANDS PRETTY?
HIHI-HI...
W-WOW...
THEY'RE PART OF A BUTTER-FLY THEMED UMBRELLA I MADE.
PRE-TTY!
HI-HIHI...

...OF SOME CORRIDOR...
...WAIT, AN IMAGE...
YEAH,
'PRETTY'
...

A FLEEING GIRL...
TAKING FLIGHT ...
...AS LIKE A FLOW-ING RIVER ...
MY NEXT BUTTERFLY UMBRELLA IS GOING TO BE RED.
WITH FLOWING CONTOURS, AND TRANSLUCENT PAPER... IT'LL BE NICE...

!
...WHAT'S THE MATTER?
MAKING UMBRELLAS...
I REALLY LOVE CREATING THINGS.
IF ONLY I COULD LIVE SOMEPLACE QUIET...
AH... I GUESS IT'S TRUE.
PRE-
TTY.
AH!
PRE-TTY ...
W-WAIT!
TH-THANK YOU...
Y-YOU ...
PRE-TTY.
H-HEY ...
WAIT A SEC-OND ...!!
KISS
H-HOW DID IT TURN INTO THIS...!?
HM ...

ONCE I CATCH FIVE HUNDR-ED...
I'LL BE FREE ...
THEY WILL MAKE ME FREE ...
... THEY SAID SO...
HUH?
... YOU'LL GO FOR A GOOD PRICE.
!
YOU'LL GO... FOR A GOOD PRICE!
HER EYES...!
YOU'RE MY... MY PREY...
WHAT IS SHE SAYING...!?
!?
...!!?

AH ...
I ONLY SHOT HER SHOULDER. LET'S TAKE HER AND GET OUTTA HERE. THE POLICE ARE CRAWLING AROUND.
YOU'D BETTER NOT HAVE KILLED HER.
WE'LL GET RID OF THE OTHER KID.
IS THIS GIRL... IS SHE DRUGGED?
NO HARD FEELINGS, BOY.
WE GOT HER WHEN SHE WAS YOUNG...
WE HAD HER HELP OUT WITH ALL KINDS OF THINGS, BUT SUDDENLY ...
YEAH, OTHER-WISE SHE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN OF MUCH HELP.
...
UH ...

HELP OUT...?
SHE HELPED YOU GUYS?
HER JOB WAS TO LURE THE TARGET INTO AN ALLEY-WAY.
WE'D CATCH THE TARGET AS SOON AS SHE LED THEM IN.
WE PROMISED TO SET HER FREE AS SOON AS SHE CAUGHT FIVE HUNDRED PEOPLE FOR US.
SHE WAS PRETTY USEFUL UNTIL SHE SUDDENLY STARTED REBELLING,
SO WE HAD THE IDEA OF MAKING HER INTO A CAT-LADY TO SELL HER OFF.
...
I REMEMBER THE WORLD AROUND ME WAS EXACTLY LIKE THIS.
PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN THE BACK-ALLEYS OF THE WORLD,
AND THE PEOPLE WHO GOT DEVOURED BY THEM...
ALL THE TIME ...

SEE YA, KID!!
I'VE...
HAD ENOUGH OF IT ALL!
!?
!?

!!?
NNGH
...

YOU PUNK ...!!
UGH...!!
OFFI-CER!!
ARE YOU OKAY SHIRO!? I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU!
...
SABU-ROUTA, HOLD HIM!!
GOT IT!
NGH!

HE WAS PROBABLY PROTECTING HIS INFORMATION.
...THAT MAN WAS A HUMAN TRAFF-ICKER.
A HUMAN TRAFFI-CKER!?
WHAT!?
KOJI-RO! THIS GUY BIT HIS TONGUE AND DIED!!
THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME-THING HE DIDN'T WANT US TO KNOW!

カシ
!

I'M SO SORRY...!
I LET MY SURPRISE GET THE BETTER OF ME...!
IF HE HAD SHOT WITH THE INTENTION TO KILL...

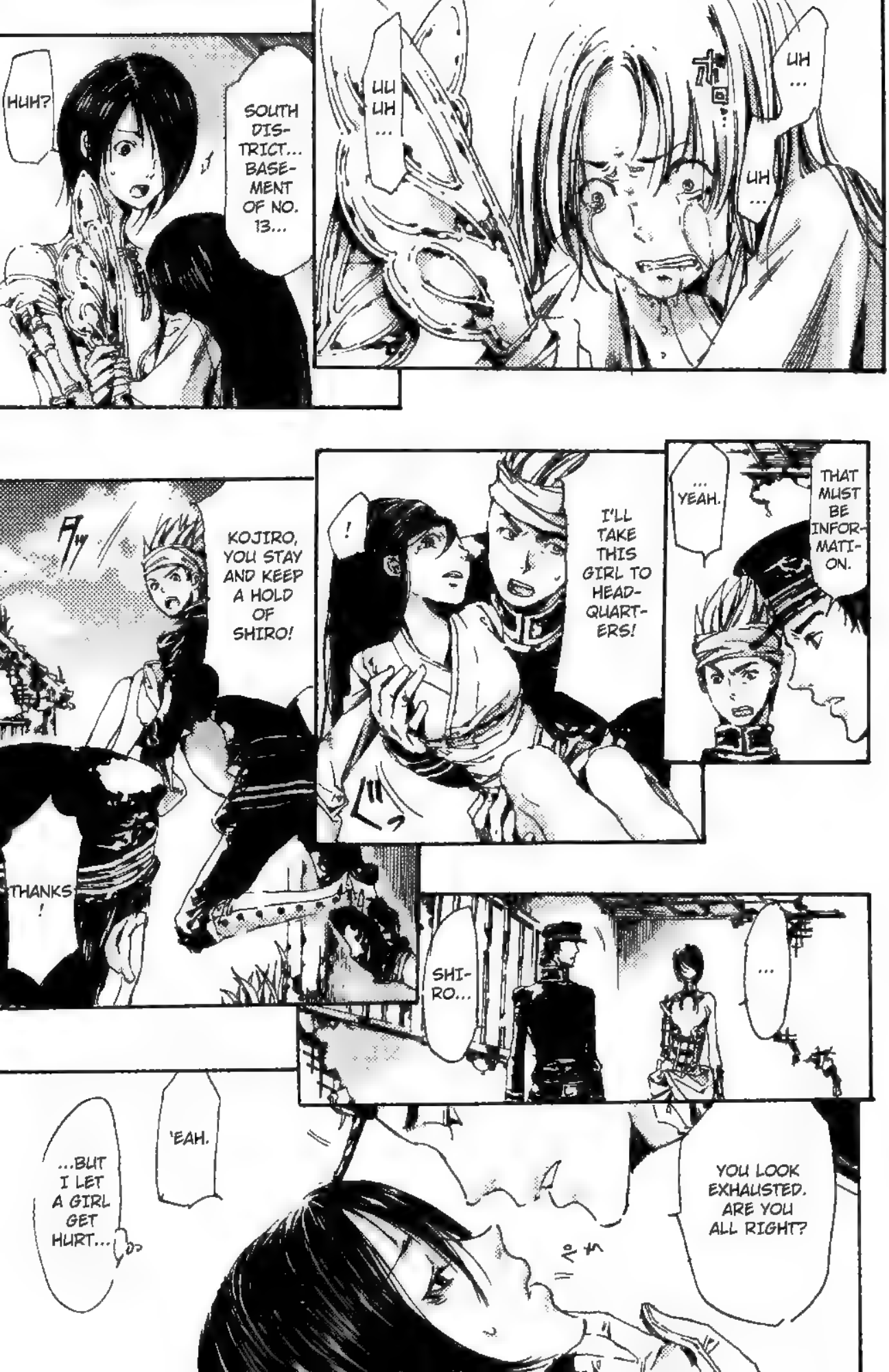
OH...! I'M SO SORRY ABOUT JUST NOW!
I MADE YOU HURT YOUR SHOUL-DER...

!!
MY PREY!
I WILL CATCH FIVE HUNDRED...
Y-YOU...
PREY...
...I CAUGHT!

...MY PREY...
HUH?

I-
IF I CAN JUST B-BECOME... HAPPY...
I-
I COULDN'T CARE LESS IF ALL OF YOU W-WERE MISERABLE!
G-GET A HOLD ON YOURSELF!
YOU DON'T BELONG TO THEM ANYM...
THEN ...
I'LL BE FREE...
TO BE UNHAPPY ...!!
I JUST... WANT TO BE HAPPY!!
THEY ALL DESE-RVE TO...
THEIR FAULT ...!!
SER-VES THEM RIGHT ...
I DON'T CARE ABOUT ANYONE ELSE!
I...
I WILL BE FREE !!
HOW COULD YOU CHEAT US LIKE THAT? YOU'RE A WOMAN TOO!
I WANT!
I WANT!
I WANT IT!!
AGGHHHHHH
ENO-UGH AL-READY !!
WE'LL HAVE YOU CUR-SED!!
I HAVE A SICK CHILD, YOU KNOW!!?
YOU MONSTER! WE'LL HAVE YOU CURSED FOR THIS!!

SERVES THEM RIGHT !!
HAHA!
HAHA-HAHA !!
AHAHAHA!
YOU MONSTER !!
HA HA ... HA ...
SHE'S BEEN RUNNING FROM TRADERS. SHE'S NOT HERSELF.
WH... WHAT'S WRONG WITH HER!?
LOOK! YOU HAVE HANDS THAT CAN FLY!
YOU'RE FREE NOW!
YOU SHOULD ATONE FOR YOUR CRIMES!
IF YOU WANT TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT THAT GUILTY CONSCIOUSNESS, PLEASE GIVE INFORMATION TO THE POLICE!
UH ...
UH ...
...
YOU MUST DO WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO DO!


HUH?
SOUTH DIS-TRICT... BASE-MENT OF NO. 13...
UH UH ...
UH ...
UH ...
KOJIRO, YOU STAY AND KEEP A HOLD OF SHIRO!
!
I'LL TAKE THIS GIRL TO HEAD-QUART-ERS!
... YEAH.
THAT MUST BE INFOR-MATI-ON.
THANKS !
SHI-RO...
...
'EAH.
...BUT I LET A GIRL GET HURT...
YOU LOOK EXHAUSTED. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

!
DO YOU REALLY PLAN ON LEAVING THIS TOWN BEHIND IN A STATE LIKE THIS!?
HEY... YOU LOOK KINDA PALE!
I CAN'T PROTECT ANYONE LIKE THIS ...
...THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU, OFFI-CER.
...I DON'T LIKE IT AT ALL.
'EAH. THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HELP.
I CAN TELL YOU'RE DEEPLY HURT!
I CAN'T JUST LEAVE YOU ON YOUR OWN IN A STATE LIKE THIS!
...I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S DRIVING YOU TO DO THIS, BUT...

AND I KNOW FROM MY JOB THAT PEOPLE WITH POWERS LIKE YOURS ARE PRONE TO LONELINESS!
A FRIEND OF A FEW MONTHS IS STILL A FRIEND!!
...WHY DO YOU CARE ABOUT ME SO MUCH, EVEN THOUGH YOU ONLY MET ME FOR THE FIRST TIME A FEW MONTHS AGO!?

YOUR HELP IS JUST A BOTHER!
...NO! I DON'T COME FROM A DECENT BACK-GROUND IN THE FIRST PLACE!

LET ME HELP YOU!
YOU'LL END UP GOING IN A BAD DIRECTION IF YOU GO ALONE!

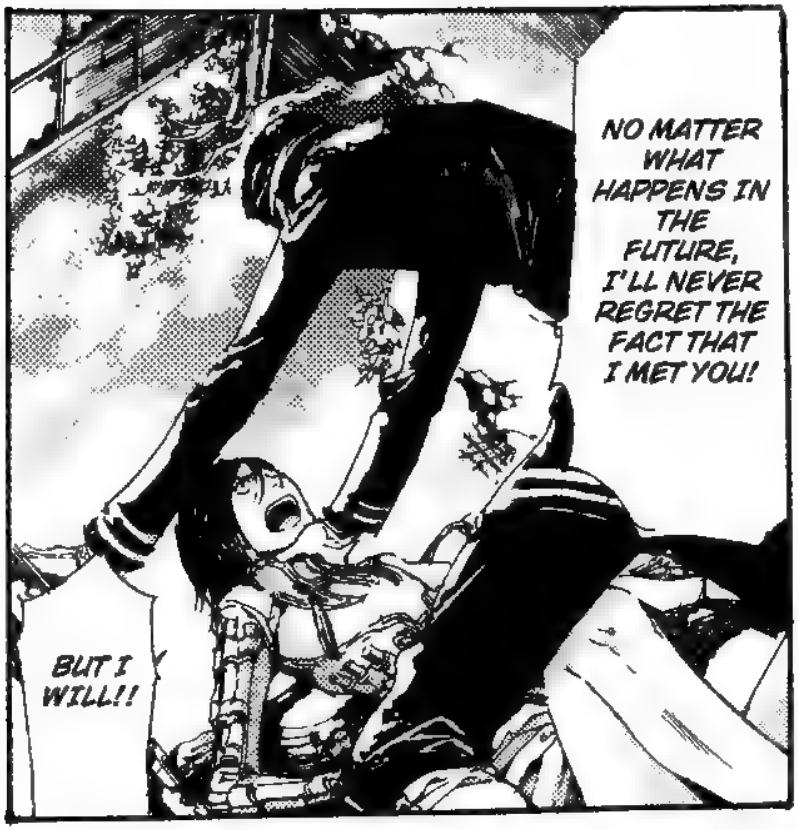
NGH!

!!

I'M MORE SELFISH THAN I LOOK.
...I SEE. THEN I'LL USE FORCE TO MAKE YOU STAY.
...!

ARE YOU SAYING, ALL THE PEOPLE YOU'VE MET UP TO THIS POINT...
THEN ARE YOU SAYING THAT YOU SHOULD HAVE NEVER GOTTEN INVOLVED WITH ME!?

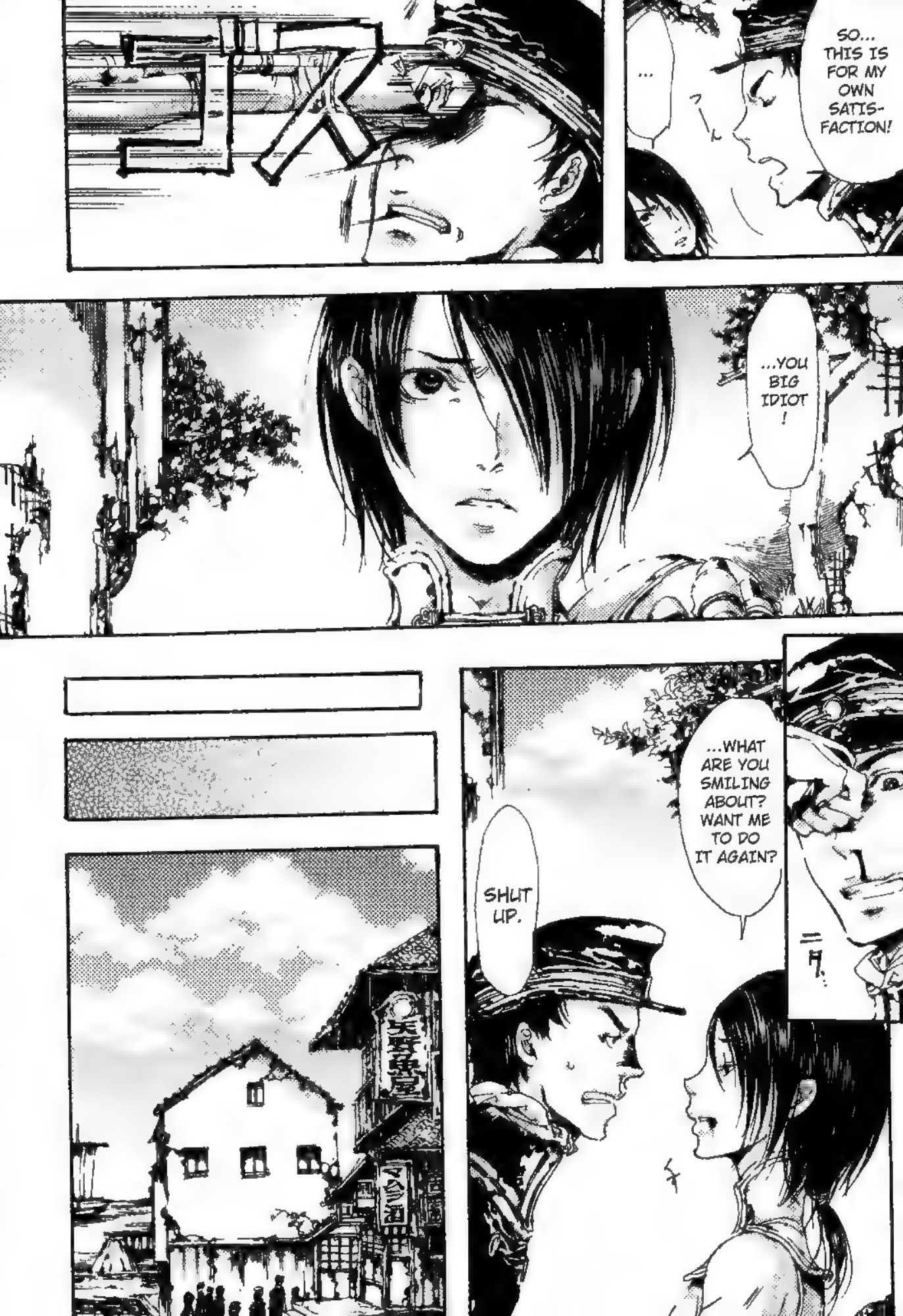
YOU ARE WASTING YOUR TIME!
GETTING INVOLVED WITH ME ISN'T GOING TO DO ANY GOOD!


BUT I WILL!!
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS IN THE FUTURE, I'LL NEVER REGRET THE FACT THAT I MET YOU!

YOU DON'T CARE IF YOU MAKE MISS AGURI OR MR. ARAGAMI CRY?
NOTHING I DO WILL EXCUSE THAT FACT!
IF ANYTHING WOULD HAPPEN TO YOU, OFFICER...!!

CAN YOU REALLY SAY IT WAS ALL A WASTE OF TIME?
...DIDN'T GAIN A SINGLE THING FROM YOU?
...

AND BE-SIDES ...
EVERYONE HAS ISSUES. I WON'T FORCE YOU TO DIVULGE ANY INFORMATION!
AND THERE ARE THINGS I CAN'T TELL YOU ABOUT MYSELF, OFFICER!
AGURI AND SABUROUTA WILL UNDERSTAND!
IF IT'S A DECISION I'VE MADE WITH MY OWN FREE WILL,
NO MATTER WHAT, I WILL NEVER REGRET IT!!
I KNOW I'LL REGRET IT!
BUT IF I LET YOU GO NOW...
AND I CAN'T BEAR TO DO THAT.


...
SO... THIS IS FOR MY OWN SATIS-FACTION!
...YOU BIG IDIOT!
...WHAT ARE YOU SMILING ABOUT? WANT ME TO DO IT AGAIN?
SHUT UP.

BE CARE-FUL!
WE CAN GO IN.
HEY, THE DOOR IS OPEN!
LOOKS LIKE JUST A WARE-HOUSE ...
THIS IS IT, SOUTH DISTRICT NO. 13!
WHOA !!
A HEAP OF DEAD BODIES... WHAT HAPPENED HERE...!?
HUMAN TRAF-FIC !?
IT MUST HAVE BEEN A HIDEOUT FOR THE HUMAN TRAFFICKERS... BUT I GUESS SOMEONE ELSE GOT HERE FIRST.
DAMN IT... WE CAN'T GET ANY EVIDENCE FROM DEAD BODIES!
I GUESS THEY GOT THE BETTER OF US.

SIR! WE FOUND A DOOR IN THE BACK THAT LEADS TO A LOWER FLOOR!
BY THE WAY DIDN'T THE INFORMATION SAY 'BASEMENT'?
YOU'RE RIGHT THERE ARE STILL OTHER WAYS TO INVESTIGATE
...AT LEAST WE KNOW NOW THAT THEY HAD A CONNECTION WITH TRAFFICKERS
WHAT!?
IT'S FULL OF CAPTIVES!
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT ANYMORE!!
WE'RE HERE TO SAVE YOU!
THIS IS THE POLICE!!

YEAH, YEAH!!
WE DID IT, RURI!!
WE DID IT, SAOTOME! IT DIDN'T HELP OUR INVESTIGATION... BUT THIS IS STILL A BIG CATCH!!
HEY, ANRI, AREN'T YOU TIRED?
AFTER SLAUGHTERING THAT MANY PEOPLE...
HAHA!
TRAFFICKERS ARE LIKE BULLIES.
THEY'RE WEAK, NO MATTER THEIR NUMBER.
OH, THIS?
...WHAT'S THAT, A TATTOO?
HUH!? POISON!? TAKE IT OFF!!
IT'S POISONOUS PAINT.

SHIRO DREW THAT FOR ME!
WHY WOULD I?
SHIRO SAID HE WANTED TO GIVE ME THIS.
OH, BY THE WAY. CAN YOU SEE WHAT'S ON MY FACE?
YEAH, BRATTY AS ALWAYS. BUT HE'S FRIENDS WITH AN INTERESTING LOOKING POLICE OFFICER NOW.
SHIRO!? YOU FOUND HIM!?
...
ALL I SEE IS YOUR DISCOLORED SKIN FROM THE POISON.
THE IMAGE IS WASHED AWAY BY BLOOD, SO I CAN'T SEE IT.
ALL RIGHT, CAN YOU NOW PLEASE TAKE IT OFF AL-READY!?
THAT'S NO FUN!
... GEEZ.
...

I WONDER...
...
SHUT UP!
DO YOU REALLY WANT TO BE DOING THAT?
YOUR HAND MIGHT ROT, YOU KNOW?
NOW !!
WHAT DID HE DRAW ...?
I SEE...
THAT GIRL WAS TAKEN IN BY A CHARITY TEMPLE.
SINCE SHE HAD NOWHERE ELSE TO RETURN TO.
WELL... SHE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN IN A COMPLICATED SITUATION...
AND BY THE WAY,
SHIRO?

BUT EVEN IN HER MADNESS, SHE WAS ABLE TO TELL US WHERE THE VICTIMS WERE BEING KEPT.
BEING A VICTIM HERSELF,
SHE MUST HAVE FELT REGRET AT COMPRIMISING WITH THE TRAFFICKERS TO PROTECT HERSELF.
THANKS TO HER, ALL THE OTHER VICTIMS WERE RESCUED.
YOU DID A GOOD JOB BY TAKING HER IN, SHIRO!
OH NO, I...
BUT STILL ...
YOU DID MAKE ME WORRY, AND FOR THAT YOU'LL PAY THE PENALTY.
HUH?
CLOSE YOUR EYES AND OPEN YOUR MOUTH.
HUH!?
YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO REFUSE.
'KAY THEN ...
...

NO ...!
WHAT IS THIS!?
JUST PUT IT IN YOUR MOUTH AL-READY!
WH ...!?
WHAT ...!?
W-WAIT... !!
!!

!?
PFFFFFFF!

STOP THAT !!

W-WHAT IS THIS!? IT'S GOING TO COME OFF, RIGHT !?
ウフフ
アハハハ
WHO KNOWS ?
HOW'RE YOU GONNA PLAY THOSE LITTLE GAMES OF YOURS WITH YOUR WOMEN NOW, HUH?

!!!

WHAT KIND OF GAMES DO YOU PLAY WITH WOMEN THEN?
M-MISS AGURI, I-IT'S NOTHING REALLY...!!
!!!
HAHAHA! SHIRO, YOUR MOUTH IS SO STRANGE!
...
HAHA, SORRY ABOUT THAT, SHIRO. IT'LL COME OFF JUST FINE!
...BUT I'M GLAD YOU DECIDED TO STAY!
I WAS SO WORRIED, YOU KNOW!?
HEY, KOJIRO ...
THAT GUY ISN'T WEARING ANY UNDERWEAR, IS HE?
.....!
CENSORED

I DIDN'T KNOW SHIRO HAD SO MANY FACIAL EXPRESSIONS.
HM...
ARREST THIS GUY!
PEOPLE LIKE YOU ARE CALLED PERVERTS, YOU KNOW THAT!?
I HATE UNDERWEAR!
...OR CLOTHES, FOR THAT MATTER...
WHAT THE HELL!? HOW CAN YOU HAVE SUCH A DELICATE FACE, AND SUCH LOW MANNERS AT THE SAME TIME!!
I'M IMPRESSED THAT HE WAS ABLE TO HOLD SHIRO BACK...
AND THAT GUY...
HE'S INTERESTING TOO.
AHAHAHA!
HE'S A GOOD GUY.
I COULD EAT HIM UP, JUST LIKE THAT.
...BUT I WANT TO WORK...
CAREFUL! DON'T OVERWORK YOURSELF!
THIS IS GOING TO GET EXCITING...

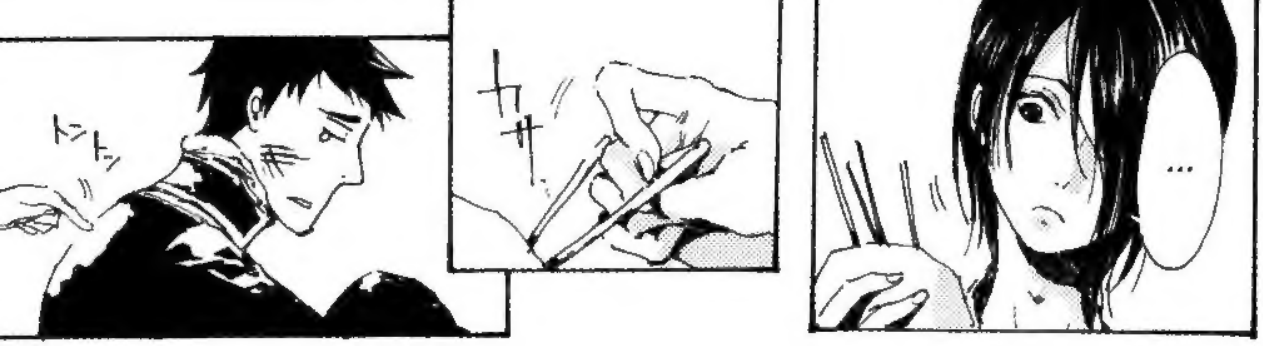
HER MEMORIES ARE STILL VAGUE THOUGH. SHE MUST HAVE GONE THROUGH SOME TERRIBLE THINGS...
SHE'S SO ENTHUSI-ASTIC ABOUT THE CHARITY WORK!
THE EFFECTS OF THE DRUGS SEEM TO HAVE WORN OFF QUITE A BIT.
OH, HOW PRETTY!
OH, BUT-TER-FLIES!
I HAVE THE FEELING, THAT I RECEIVED SOMETHING IMPORTANT...
...FROM SOMEONE, BEFORE...
I FEEL...
I FEEL SO GLAD THAT I WAS...
ABLE TO MEET THAT PERSON!
END

THANK YOU FOR READING! PLEASE ENJOY THE EXTRA'S ON THE NEXT FEW PAGES!

TSUKIJI NAO

SHAPED CANDY?
'EAH. LIKE THESE FLOWER-SHAPED ONES THAT I JUST BOUGHT.
YOU LIKE THOSE KINDS OF THINGS, EH?
DO YOU LIKE ANYTHING ESPECIALLY, OFFICER?
LET'S SEE...
CATS... I GUESS...
HUH?

C'MERE, KUROBE, MIKEMARO...
WHY DO I ALWAYS FEEL LIKE THROWING UP WHEN SEEING PEOPLE DEAL WITH SMALL ANIMALS ...
BUT FOR SOME REASON, THEY CAN'T STAND ME.
BUT DON'T YOU THINK THAT MAKES THEM EVEN CUTER!?
IT JUST MAKES ME WANT TO THROW UP EVEN MORE...
30 MIN LAT-ER...
I DIDN'T GET TO BEFRIEND THEM AGAIN...
HAHA, SERVES YOU RIGHT!
GASP !!
MEOW!
MEOW!!
!!!
...


トントン
カサ
...

MEOW!!
CANDY

D-DON'T EVEN DARE TO EAT IT...!!
KOJIRO, WHY DID YOU BRING THIS CANDY?
IT MAY BE CANDY, BUT IT IS STILL A CAT!!
KEPT IT ANYWAY, AND EVEN DECIDED TO DISPLAY IT
THE END
OKAY, FINE THEN...
I-I DON'T NEED YOUR PITY!

HELLO, NICE TO MEET YOU! MY NAME IS NAO TSUKIJI!
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR READING MY STORY!
I HOPE YOU ENJOYED IT, AND I'M VERY HAPPY IF YOU DID!

SINCE THIS IS MY FIRST PUBLISHED WORK, I FEEL SO OVERWHELMED BY WAVES OF NERVOUSNESS, JUST WONDERING ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE THINK OF IT!

AT FIRST, WHEN I WAS NOMINATED FOR THE WINGS MANGA PRIZE, MY ADVISOR TOLD ME I SHOULD MAKE SOMETHING WITH A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT VIBE FROM MY ORIGINAL SUBMISSION FOR THE NEXT STAGE.
THE RESULT OF THAT BECAME THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THIS MANGA.

MY ORIGINAL SUBMISSION WAS A ROMANTIC COMEDY STORY ABOUT A VIRGIN GIRL. SO I WAS DETERMINED TO CREATE SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT THIS TIME OVER. I WAS PRETTY CALM WHEN I HAD COMPLETED IT, BUT WHEN IT WAS DECIDED THAT MY STORY WAS TO BE PUBLISHED, I JUST COULDN'T BELIEVE IT! IT WAS A MIRACLE FOR ME!
ONE THAT I'M VERY GRATEFUL FOR!

I STARTED THIS STORY WITH A LOT OF DETERMINATION TO GO FOR IT. WHILE HAVING FUN DOING SO, I PUT MY ALL INTO THIS FIRST VOLUME! EVEN SO, THERE IS STILL SO MUCH MORE THAT I WANT TO ADD TO THIS WORLD! I WOULD LIKE TO KEEP MYSELF DEVOTED TO IT.
IN THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS, I'D LIKE TO SHOW THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN A LOT OF NEW WAYS, AND A LOT OF NEW EXPRESSIONS!

IT'S GETTING TOWARDS THE END, BUT TO ALL THE READERS WHO'VE BEEN SENDING SUPPORT TO ME, KOJIRO AND SHIRO, I WANT TO TELL YOU THAT YOUR SUPPORT HAS BEEN MY MOTIVATION! ALSO, TO MY ADVISOR WHO'S BEEN SUPPORTING ME THROUGH ALL THIS, GIVING ME INSPIRATION FOR TITLES AND CHARACTER NAMES, TO MY SUPPORTING FRIENDS, AND TO MY FAMILIY WHO HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN ME; FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART, I WOULD REALLY LIKE TO THANK ALL OF YOU!

IT WAS ALWAYS MY DREAM TO SEND MY OWN MANGA OUT INTO THE WORLD!

HOWEVER MANY TIMES I SAY IT, IT WILL NEVER BE ENOUGH, BUT THANK YOU SO MUCH!

TSUKIJI NAO
SEP 2008

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